

MAINWARING

NEW NOVELS

THE HOUSE KATHARINE TYNAN

THE ROMANTIC MAY SINCLAIR

THE PEOPLE OF THE RUINS
EDWARD SHANKS

A TALE THAT IS TOLD
FREDERICK NIVEN

THE LAST FORTNIGHT
MARY AGNES HAMILTON

WANG THE NINTH
PUTNAM WEALE

MAINWARING

by

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CHAPTER I

SQUAB MAINWARING

THERE'S nothing for it but to begin at the beginning, I don't mean of Mainwaring for nobody knows his beginning now that he himself can't tell it—I mean rather the beginning of my commerce with him—which was at Marseilles in the 'seventies. The history of a man—I know that very well—can't be rounded up into a tale in the artist's sense. Nature won't have anything to say to your antithetical light and shade, your balance and chiaroscuro and climax. Form, which all the poets talk of and none of them understand, is no concern of Nature's, occupied with her enormous affair of production, absorption, and reproduction. Things happen in life because other things have already happened. You souse into a puddle because you have tripped over a stone; you tripped over a stone because you were looking at Thompson's wife. All is predetermined, but fortuitously, by the Fairies of gestation and birth. So Mainwaring burned his way through the England and London of the last generation because a Doctor Benjamin and Maria his wife were what they were, and did what they did—I

never knew them, nor can guess at their affairs—in far-off Ballymena, or because remoter Mainwarings and their obscurer Marias, or perhaps Bridgets, burned and fused in their loves. Heredity! Doom! Is that all? Is it so simple? And yet Mainwaring—my Mainwaring, England's (since she adopted him) Richard Denzil Blaise Mainwaring—was a genius, and could drive men like sheep down steep places into the sea; whereas Dr Benjamin his father drove nothing but a gig, and drove that so badly when drunk one foggy day that he drove it into a stone wall, overturned it and broke his neck. Yet mark: it was because of that untimely indiscretion of his that Mainwaring himself went to Marseilles, saw me there, and involved me in his dangerously heady fortunes. It was because of that—but no more philosophy. I could go on for ever—and it is a sign of age.

He had perhaps been there a year when I first went there, meaning to spend a few days in a January sun as fierce as ours of June, and in leisurely, happy contemplation of all the jolly things I might do next. My old uncle Mompesson, the Dean of St Neots, had died and left me five hundred a year, very unexpectedly. It chimed in so happily with my marked distaste for any kind of regular work that together they rang down the curtain on my acts in the Temple. I had headed due South like a belated swallow, only stopping

at Marseilles because there were so many roads out of it. The Messageries Maritimes would take me to Madeira, to Morocco, to Algiers, to Genoa, Naples, Messina, Smyrna, Constantinople; and I was ready for all of them. Meantime I loved the smell of oranges, the dust and glare, the shipping and Arabs of the Cannebière, so there I stayed, smoking and drinking coffee, and reading the novels of Alphonse Daudet, through a more splendid January month than I had ever dreamed of.

It was on the Cannebière that Mainwaring stalked into my notice. I saw him at once, he riveted my eyes; I saw him again at the same hour of the next morning; after that I looked for him and scarcely ever missed him. A tall, very black-and-white, gaunt, starved and distraught young man, outrageously thin, with cheek-bones like knives and elbows like hedgestakes, in a thin broadcloth frock, closely buttoned, withered black trousers, and a hat and pair of boots which, I give my word, were for tears. Nobody but a Frenchman—you will say, a stage Frenchman—could have worn them as he did, with a flourish, and a kind of bitter gaiety; but I confess that I admired the gallantry, done, as it must have been, on a gnawing stomach and through aching eyeballs. If it was cold—and it can be shrewishly cold in Marseilles—he wore a double-breasted brown overcoat, far too thin, which had the odd effect of making him look less clad, and more blackly clad than

ever. I don't pretend to explain that—but I state it. Atop of all that I should like to add that I never believed him a Frenchman. I could hardly tell you why, except it may have been that in his rare detached moments I seemed to see that quite unwarranted air of being a lord of the earth, free to range above it, on it and below it, which is the badge of my own nation. But his detached moments were few. He was nearly always absorbed in his thoughts, his head either sunk to his breast or uplifted, convening with the blue sky; but when, as often happened, he tilted into another wayfarer—to see his bow, to see the flourish of his deplorable hat was to be transported to the great days of France, when the Comte de Guiche paid his court to Madame de Brissac, or Monsieur made way for her adorable friend and critic. That was French enough—and yet, he could not be a Frenchman. He was not handsome; he stooped his head, he was of an unwholesome pallor, his jaw was slightly twisted—but there was an air of nobility about him, and a wrung and rather terrible seriousness, all the more arresting because, as I believe, it was due to hunger. He wore a thin black beard, a French student's beard, which fluttered in the least breeze. Under that it was easy to see that his mouth was well-shaped, though he had a trick of pressing the lips hard over the teeth which was ugly. His chin jutted forward like the cutwater of a destroyer. His eyes, as I found when I came to be

intimate with him, were remarkable—of a deep and steady gray which had the power of dilation and the quality of fire to a very high degree. It was impossible not to believe him when those stern eyes, absorbing you, enforced the tale. They were his greatest asset in this world of gullible men and too kind women.

Generally he stalked alone, but rarely a friend, a French gentleman of dapper appearance and comfortable rotundity, was with him. On such occasions Mainwaring talked vehemently, in fierce and urgent whispers, enforcing his impetuous, stabbing eloquence with slaps of the palm; or standing still in mid-pavement, his friend firmly gripped by the lapel, he would raise his bony free hand higher and higher towards Heaven, his whole person straining up after it, as if the scarecrow he was were on the point of flight upon the wings of his words. His friend, too polite to reveal the embarrassment he was suffering, but anxious to end it, used to agree with him quickly. '*En effet,*' I have heard him say more than once or twice, and at frequent intervals, '*tout est dit*' which it never was—but '*On nous écoute*' underlay whatever he may have said—and that was true, and no wonder at all. I was never fortunate enough to be one of his overhearers, but was sufficiently filled with his fiery flow to be indifferent to its purport. It poured forth of him like a lava stream, and was punctuated, as that is, by the frequent fling-up of some great rock of oratory,

some bursting proof, some pounding, shattering conclusion. I suppose it must be politics. Nothing else stirs an Englishman to the very depths—in those days I assumed his Englishry. I was right about his matter, anyhow. Politics it was. He had an infallible means of saving the world for ever on the tip of his tongue, and spilling over.

My interest grew fast and carried me to lengths. It came to this, that I lay in wait for him, like a beast of chase, to catch him at a meal. Noon was the consecrated hour in Marseilles, but the feeding-grounds were innumerable, and it took time. I quested far and wide—beginning with the *crémeries* and enlarging into more vinous and less savoury dens. He was a shy bird—there was no finding him. And then one afternoon I almost fell over his shocking boots, at the hour of absinthe. There he was, his opalescent bane beside him, with folded arms and a frown upon him, stretched in the declining sun of the *Cannebière*. With a murmur and touch of the hat, which he just acknowledged, I sat at his table and ordered my poison. I had the *Petit Marseillais* in my hand, and presently showed him a paragraph of home news, taking my courage in both hands.

‘This is how they feed us exiles, sir,’ I said. He withdrew himself from his visions and knitted his brows over the paragraph. It had been to the effect that ‘Sir Bentivoglio, *premier ministre d’Angleterre*’—this was their shot at our Right

Hon. Isaac Bentivoglio, exotic leader of the Tory party at that time—that Sir Bentivoglio had received a deputation of ‘merchants of the highest consideration in London’ and promised them, with a good deal of high-sounding phrases, a Royal Commission about something or other. Its brazen emptiness still adhered to it.

Mainwaring read, and nodded once or twice as he did so. Then he returned me the paper with a fine air of detachment. ‘I despise um,’ he said—and I knew his nation—‘as you despise the rat in your bread-pan.’ He let it go at that, but then, warming to his own metaphor, ‘If I could fasten me teeth fairly in him, I’d shake him like the Ghetto rat he is and fling him out to a Brixton ashbin. Then let them see the ticks of rhetoric stream off him to find warmer quarters.’

Once launched, he held on to this vein for half-an-hour, pursuing it in all its ramifications; and, if you’ll believe me, never once let go of his metaphor. Bentivoglio was a Ghetto rat to the end, and the flowers of rhetoric which he threw up were all Oriental and rodent. It was really a fine feat, and enabled me to understand how literary the man was. His speech was exactly what Sir Walter Scott calls ‘artificial and combined narrative.’ The end was laid in the beginning, the climax foreseen, the swift descent prepared for; but something more genuine lay behind, whether sheer literary inspiration or strong

conviction I was not then able to say. I know very well which it was, now.

We parted on very good terms, not without an understanding that we were to meet again. Indeed, he asked me to dinner for a certain day fixed, at a certain restaurant specified. So good a house was that that I may have betrayed surprise—to him, I mean, preternaturally sharp as his poverty had made him. He took it very easily. ‘Have no fear,’ he said; ‘they pay me on the 15th of the month. It’s a day you may be sure of.’ I laughed it off, naturally, but found out afterwards how truly he had spoken. He received £60 a year as teacher of English in a School of Languages—that and some very occasional and precarious journalism kept body and soul together.

In the course of that dinner, at the *Bon Provençal*, he discovered to me the length and depth of his ambition. It was simply, as we say now, to make good; but I did not get then, and it was many years before I could get, a full view of the outrageous, exorbitant state of being which he would have allowed to be ‘good.’ As he put it at the time, it was, ‘I have got it in me, d’ye see. There’s a furnace roaring in me guts. Let it out then and lick the grease off the skins of the English. They are no countrymen of mine, why should I be squeamish?’

‘You think of politics?’ I inquired. ‘Home Rule, I suppose?’ But he tossed his hair back.

'No such thing. Home Rule, my dear sir? Vestryman's work. I shall stand for an English constituency, and root myself in the fat English loam. Wait till I have my roots well in, and see if I heave up the soil. Labour, my friend, is the ticket. There's dirty weather brewing in your island. Find a labourer who knows what he is talking about, has a grudge, and a fire in his guts, and you may expect a conflagration. I haven't starved for five-and-twenty years without a cud of gall. I have it in me white as vitriol and as bitter.'

'Labour' had not then the significance it has now. It now means an organised political force, but it had no such implication in the 'seventies. I took it from him, therefore, as a sporting proposal, very light-heartedly. 'We shall weather it, I daresay,' I said; and he gloomed.

'There'll be dirty weather,' he said, 'when I've warmed to the work.' After a pause he burst out: 'How's this for a tool in your hand? When they leave their middens and mixens, their rat-haunted hovels, and see the rich in Park Lane, and the pretty rich in Wimbledon and Hampstead? See them with eyes washed out in bitter gall? There's a few of you, they will say, and begod there's millions of us—starving, stewing, swarming like maggots in an old cheese. Come now, will you fight it out—or will you hand over? What then, my friend?'

He seemed to me like a man who knew what he

could do. I didn't credit him with any scruples—yet I sheltered me behind the British character. These things never have come off since the time of Richard the Second. Not a high philosophy, I own; the philosophy, indeed, ascribed to the ostrich. But it has served us for six hundred years.

He mellowed as the Volnay began to work, faced ways and means, warmed to the idea that journalism might get him out of his ushership—which he said stripped the skin off him and rubbed salt into the raw flesh. Even that had its graces, he would allow. 'Every now and then I get one of 'em by the ankle and sweep the room with him,' he said. 'And, after all, I love a fight.'

With all his copiousness—and he never stopped talking, except to bolt his food or to drink—I noted then a characteristic of him, which has been more than confirmed since, that all his zest was for the future; that the past indeed did not really exist for him. I was told nothing—I never learned anything but the bare bones—of his birth and upbringing. He hardly spoke of Ireland, and when of Irishmen it was with the utmost scorn. 'The black Irish,' they were for him. He had been educated—that was obvious: he had classics, languages, history, literature. He knew the by-ways too: he knew eighteenth-century poetry extremely well—much better than I, who professed poetry. But he cared nothing for his scholarship. He had got it—and the sources were therefore

dried up. Facts then were entirely to seek in Mainwaring's conversation, though I am quite sure that his prospective actions were facts to himself. I never met a man so sure of himself as he was. He was so sure that he was not at all in a hurry. Gnawing his fingers, or dipping his crusts, he was content to starve in exile, with his hollow eyes fixed firmly upon the years to come. So he was fated, though I didn't know it, to mew his squabhood out for another four years. How old was he at this time? Twenty-eight to thirty, I put it.

We parted, after that first dinner of ours, the best of friends, to all appearance, though I did not then flatter myself—nor have I ever—that I was more than a convenience to Mainwaring: a sort of washpot. Yet it was he who dated our next meeting; and named the place. As for me, I was glad of his company, and admit I was interested in him. He had plain marks of genius—complete self-absorption, and that quiescence under the ravages of the inner and more remote *ego* which only geniuses have. With all the rest of us the citizen who sits in the parlour window holds the latch-key. If he occasionally leaves it about and suffers the loss of it, he gets it back again. Not so with Mainwaring. There was, apparently, no citizen-lodger—or perhaps there was no parlour-window. He was from within outwards a non-moral being. His good pleasure was his law. The policeman was simply fate.

I had two or three funny instances of that, in the course of our dinners together. It had been arranged, I ought to say, that we dined each other in turn. The host of the turn chose the eating-house, ordered the meal, and naturally paid for it. All went well at first; but as the month waned Mainwaring's purse emptied—while his will to feast remained as imperative as ever. Then came the inevitable. How was I to guess that he had not a stiver to his name? We had, I recollect, a *bouillabaisse*, *soubise* cutlets, ortolans, and two bottles of Hermitage which must have cost eighteen francs apiece at the least. Brandy of 1834 with our coffee. We sat late, and he talked all the time with a red-hot, biting gaiety quite impossible to reproduce. It was the kind of wild mockery a wit might have played with the night before his execution. Then came the hats and sticks—and the folded bill on a salver.

Mainwaring didn't touch it, but stared at it, poking his head forward, as if he saw something dead—say, John the Baptist's head—on the charger, and expected to smell the taint. That may have lasted sixty seconds, and then he plunged his hands into his trouser-pockets (which were straight-cut and high under his waistcoat), tossed back his shock of black hair with a great gesture of scorn, and strode out of the place like Irving in *The Corsican Brothers*. I admit that I paid the waiter, and even paid him again, when Mainwaring repeated the *gran' rifiuto*. But when,

once more, he was under the same tragic necessity he funk'd it, and asked me to lend him the money. I said, when I had settled up for him, that I had wondered whether he would use his short way a third time, and he looked at me like a soul in grief. 'My dear, don't ask it of me. It would involve killing the waiter.' 'Killing him? Why killing him?' 'My friend, he would insult me, and I should be bound to take notice. Observe this as an elementary rule of public life, that your opening pitch rules the day. If you begin with a scream, you must end with a yell. If you stand up against tyranny, you must have the tyrant's head on a pike before you go home to bed. To that rule there's no exception—or none for me, at any rate. No, no. That place is shut to me.'

Such was the callow Mainwaring, mewing his youth in France, with his far, angry sight fixed upon the singing-birds in English woodlands. I left him in Marseilles and went Eastward in a Messageries boat. I heard nothing more of him for five years; and then there he was, up to the neck in the thing. You shall have it as it came to me in Allenby's letter.

CHAPTER II

REPORT FROM TRAFALGAR SQUARE

ALLENBY was a junior in those days, with a fair Chancery practice which would have been fairer if he had not had a weakness for journalism of the lighter kind, and for the gadding and gaping at side-shows which play catchball with the profession. I had been in chambers with him five years before, and he now wrote to me about a business in which we had both been then concerned. I omit all that as unimportant, but he wound up with a brisk description of the London news which we shall want. His letter, I ought to have said, had been hunting me since June and only ran me to ground in October.

‘Great doings here on May Day,’ he wrote: ‘red flag, bloody pikes, broken heads, reign of terror, but that of Saturn in full view, we understand. The out-of-works of last winter were really responsible: *they* sowed, but the Trade Unions watered. There’s no doubt of it. . . . I was out and about, you will readily believe, and saw it all rather well from the steps of the National Gallery, where, at need, I was prepared to protect the mild-eyed Madonnas tending their babes

within, and (if looting were to become general) to have a ready hand for the little Van Eyck of What-do-you-call-him and his teeming wife which we both admire . . . There was an enormous crowd swaying like a tide at the turn round a platform at the feet of Nelson. On that rostrum I made out by his superb gestures Ferdinand, of course, the Quixotic Ferdinand; with him Bill Birks, M.P., in a tall bowler: he made a good Sancho till he lost his temper. But the great man was a new man, at least to me; a black-headed, black-bearded cadaver called Mainwaring, who figured afterwards on the charge-sheet as Richard Denzil Blaise Mainwaring, "of no occupation." Blaise is good, but Blazes were better. He is an anarchist with a sense of humour, and therefore should go far; but at present he won't go any farther than Wormwood Scrubbs. He has all the arts of riot at his finger-tips, speaks with a steady flow, a kind of maddening monotony, vitriol out of a feed-pipe. The effect is that of the Moorish tom-tom, to stir the blood to boiling, or to give you an internal itch. You have to scratch or rave—and, by George, sir, you *do* scratch. It was he who brought on the fighting, for fighting there was. Ferdinand got a raw scone, Bill Birks six months.

'It came about like this. While Mainwaring was driving it in, steadily, monotonously, inevitably—but good matter, you know, coherent, cogent, syntactical matter; very French matter,

however; much about the "right" to work and nothing at all about the duty of doing it decently—the police were forming a line across the Square, trying to push the mob north and south, and by all means to head them off Cockspur Street and the way to the clubs. Some of them got up Pall Mall afterwards—but I did not see that part. Mainwaring sees their game, but keeps up his dead-level tom-tom business until he judges the moment come. His crescendo begins, his voice rises to a wail, to a long howling like wolves at sundown; then he is transformed; he tosses back his head; his long forelock flies up like sea-weed on the crest of a wind-blown wave. "To Hell with the peelers!"—that gave me his nation—came like a great foghorn; and he jumped off the platform.

'Then chaos and old night. Mainwaring is a tall man, and I could see him, at work, swimming rather than hitting out, forging a way for himself towards the steps, with a very nasty-looking, evidently organised band of followers. Marry, here was miching mallecho, but I give you my word that what followed his conquest of the steps was sheer fun. He and his lot, having turned the position, charged the police from behind. "Helmets, my lads," I heard from him, and have sworn to it in Bow Street and at the Bailey, where he also got six months.

'It is the fact that they dis-helmeted a round dozen of our bobbies. They tipped the helmets

forward from behind and then tossed them into the air. The crowd in front caught the idea. The air seemed thick with helmets; bandied about like footballs—or a snowstorm in Brobdingnag. Everyone but the police enjoyed himself, and personally I don't doubt that Mainwaring saved us from a good deal of shop-looting or even bloodshed. But the police got cross and used their truncheons; then one or two were pulled down and rather badly mauled. Mainwaring himself—I saw him—unhorsed a mounted man, and got up himself. That little vanity was his ruin. They nabbed him easily. The Life Guards did the rest. But a wag, don't you think?

'He defended himself, both before Sir John and afterwards at the Old Bailey. Very well, too—but he was savage and feared not God, nor man either. You easily forgive the first, but not the second. That put the jury's back up. If he had excused the thing as a joke, which indeed it was, as funny a thing as I ever saw, he might have got off—but he didn't. He was solemn and savage, like a serious cannibal at a feast. He made a mess of it, in fact. Now he's in chokey, thinking it over: a made man if he sticks to it. Don't you wish you had been there? . . .'

There was more, but that was more than enough. I was young enough in those days to like mischief. It meant movement, anyhow. One's great fear was stagnancy. And of course I remembered Mainwaring as the hungry young *pion* of Marseilles

whose tossing up of his forelock, as Allenby described it, had so often solved the difficulties arising out of a dinner eaten and an empty pocket. Looking back upon him as he then was I had no trouble in seeing him a candidate for tribunitial powers. Here he was, then, arrived. I wrote to him in his prison, recalling myself to his mind, and our feasts and speculations in the little eating-houses of the Cannebière; but I had no answer. However, not long afterwards—in the ensuing spring, I believe—I met him in Venice.

CHAPTER III

BALM OF HEROES

VENICE is a first-rate meeting-place for acquaintance, because there is nothing whatever to do but to go on being acquainted. The nights are soft; nobody dreams of going to bed. Florio's one evening, Quadri's the next: you talk and talk and talk. The mornings you have to yourself; the afternoons you use for sleep and tea-drinking. Before dinner you canter in the Lido—and all the time you talk and go on being acquainted.

It was there that I met again the hero of Trafalgar Square in the not at all surprising company of Lady Whitehaven. But by that time I knew enough of her not to be surprised. You make a row, you get a broken pate, you go to jail. If it's politics you are somebody. If you are somebody you are drawn into Lady Whitehaven's (*were*, alas! That generous pretty woman is no more) hospitable net. Here then was Mainwaring, swimming with the best—Lord Gerald Gorges among them, on his way to his duties in Rome—and bullying his captor—which she allowed. Lord Whitehaven himself was the first of the

party I saw, Lord Whitehaven himself, with his hat on one side of his head, and his tilted white moustaches, looking, as ever, like a General in an Offenbach opéra-comique; permanently satisfied with himself and the universe. He hailed me by saying that he thought I had been dead, and adding, 'Sorry—of course it was your uncle.' He told me, 'I've got the *Zenobia* off the mole. We've been nosing about in the Greek islands. Ever see Santorin? Worth it, I assure you. It's so hot there that they harvest their grapes by moonlight. You can light a match by holding it to one of the rocks.'

I asked him whom he had on board. Her ladyship, he said, and a convoy of lions: Gerald Gorges, Llanfrechfa, Miss Blint, a poetess and hanger-on whom I recollected, old Windover. That was all. And where did *he* come in? At meal-time, he said, and at the wings. 'Thank God, I've done with women! Now I can enjoy my food, and look on. It is amusing me a good deal.' His rogue's eyes—blue as nemophilas, but rogue's eyes for all that—twinkled. Then malice lit a little fire in them.

'By George, I forgot him altogether. We have Mainwaring with us, the very last lion littered. My dear chap, you must know Mainwaring. He's a snorter.'

I laughed. 'Oh, but I do know him. I knew him years ago, when he snorted in a whisper.'

'He snorts through a speaking-trumpet now,

my boy,' said the lord. 'Whether he means it or not I can't say. My mind is open. But there's no doubt of one thing that he means.'

I asked him what he thought. He said, 'I fancy Mainwaring is abroad with an oyster-knife. Of course, he may be a Saviour of Society, and all that—as *well*—but I doubt it.'

I said that he struck me as having a grudge against the world at large, and that he had some reasons for it.

'He has the cheek of the devil, anyhow,' Lord Whitehaven said. 'My wife likes him—that's in his favour, I suppose.'

'He'll certainly take it so,' I answered him—'And make it so,' his lordship added.

It appeared that the whole party was on the lagoon somewhere, and that Lord Whitehaven had a free hand for the day. We lunched together, and afterwards I met his company on the Piazza. There again, then, was Mainwaring—in a loose grey suit, with an open-throated collar and red tie. Bareheaded, club-bearded, still horribly thin, with a smoulder of fire in his hollow eyes—the perfect bomb-thrower of fiction. I must say that in spite of all that—or because of it—he held his own with complete indifference to the high company in which he found himself; and having the wit to be entirely himself, was easily the most significant member of the party. Lord Gerald Gorges, that beautiful young man, the perfection of whose clothes alone might have intimidated an

outsider, looked for once what he really was—a handsome oaf. Mainwaring had resolved him to that. He was sulky and speechless. As for Lord Llanfrechfa, nothing could have made him look less than a gentleman; but he looked such a very ordinary gentleman that nobody need notice him. There was no question of Lady Whitehaven's preoccupation. One saw that in a moment.

A word about that charming, unhappy, sweet creature—the kindest woman I ever knew in my life—at that moment upon the knife-edge of her career, just about to begin her slide downwards to heartbreak and despair. Her more flaming sister Leven, Duchess and termagant, has put her in the shade with the vulgar, but never, never with the discerning. The Duchess was a peony to an iris in her regard, a peacock to a silver pheasant. But she was a Duchess who could romp like a milkmaid—and that's enough for the public. But Lady Whitehaven was a delicate looking blonde, with the most enchanting air of naïveté upon her that I have ever seen in a woman. It was no less enchanting for being a deliberate work of art. Of course, nobody was ever so innocent as Lady Whitehaven looked. She was by no means what she appeared, neither delicate (but on the contrary, of perfect health), nor naïve. But she had not been given Greuze eyes for nothing, and like all women of the world she had made it her early business to find out what suited her. She was naïve to perfection, just as

she was always perfectly dressed; and with those two keen and dangerous weapons, having married Whitehaven and a sufficiency of means, she set out upon her career of breaking hearts. Poor soul, finally she broke her own.

Perhaps she was not beautiful—no, as Mainwaring justly and bluntly said to me by-and-by, she certainly wasn't; but she was delicately pretty, really a lovely woman—like a tea-rose—and with her emotions very near the surface, her sensibilities enfolding them like a flower-sheath, she was as responsive to the play of character as a taut wire. She thrilled to a touch, almost to a breath.

One word upon the queer couple she made with Whitehaven. They had had children, but were not likely to have any more; yet they were excellent together. They observed a strict, very friendly neutrality, each conducting his own affairs and ignoring those of his neighbour. Whitehaven was never outrageous, except now and then in what he was pleased to say, and though she went pretty close to the edge, I think he knew to a horse-hair's breadth what it amounted to. He might—he did—say that he couldn't afford to walk with her for fear of being mistaken for someone else—but *he* knew, bless you! A squeeze of the hand, a note, a kiss in a dusky garden—certainly he believed in no more than that. Nor do I—either before Mainwaring's day, before Gerald Gorges' day, or since. But Mainwaring knew nothing about that. The elements of comedy were already there.

Mainwaring absorbed in the lady, the lady no longer absorbed in Mainwaring, if she ever had been—but dangerously interested in the young lord.

Well, we met on the Piazza, and I saluted Lady Whitehaven as she deserved. She saluted me, on the other hand, as, on the whole, I did not deserve—for she and her lord were old friends of my family's and entitled to my attentions. 'This is nice. It is exactly what I have been saying I wanted. How do you manage to be so apropos? Of course you know all of us.' She named them. 'Lord Gerald Gorges'—a who-the-devil nod from him. We had never met—'Lord and Lady Windover, Lord Llanfrechfa, Miss Blint. Oh, and Mr Mainwaring—You *must* know each other.'

'It so happens that we do,' I said, 'though Mr Mainwaring looks as if he didn't believe it.' Mainwaring, who had been gazing at the pigeons about the roots of the Campanile, now scowled at me—then laughed (like a tombstone) and shook hands.

'You are a wraith from the past,' he said. 'You remind me of myself, and make me think I'm as hungry as I always was then. But I've been in gaol since I saw you——'

'And are evidently still there,' I put in, and made Lady Whitehaven blush. She laughed too—chiefly, I think, because Mainwaring opened his mouth and said nothing. He didn't know what the deuce I meant, and that made him cross.

'Ah, if you're laughing at me—— Well, next time I go to gaol, it's not you I'll ask to bail me out.'

I went on. 'If I were in the gaol in which you are, I'm hanged if I'd look for bail,' and then he caught me up.

'My service is perfect freedom, my dear man,' he said. 'Like a prisoner of war, I am learning languages.'

'Not from me, Mr Mainwaring,' she said. 'You—know too many for me.'

'Madam, I forget them all when I hear yours,' he said. Lord Gerald had strolled away, feeling that that was no place for him; but she called him back by Miss Blint, and we all sat down, joining our tables into one.

I had no opportunity for a day or two for a talk apart with Mainwaring. So far as I saw his people at all it was in the Piazza at night. They slept on the yacht and never showed up in Venice till dinner-time. It was plain that her ladyship had her work cut out for her to keep Gerald Gorges up to the mark and at the same time hold Mainwaring at a distance from it. Master Gerald was a spoilt child of fortune. The son of a Duke, and the brother of one, with a private fortune derived from his mother, with his years and his good looks, there's no wonder if he set a value on himself, and if it was a high figure. He was tall, thin, dark, hawk-nosed, high-sniffing; clean-shaven,

with a beautifully-cut mouth and chin. As for his eyes, fringed by long black lashes which would have set up a reigning beauty, I assure you they were the colour of sapphires. It is a fact that Venetian women used to follow him about, and that one heard, '*Come è bello—bello!*' in whispers by no means too soft for him to hear. He could not but be self-conscious, and of course he was. I don't know that he had a mind. I don't know that he had any particular reason for being alive. I am not sure even that he *was* really alive. He rarely spoke, he never seemed to like anything. He was one of those people you describe by negations—except in the matter of looks. They had pushed him into diplomacy, and he was on his way, now, to Rome; a pretty good beginning for him, too. Now, Lady Whitehaven never could resist a pretty fellow, even if he was stuffed with sawdust, and obviously as cold as a dead fish. She was not in love with him—though on the point of being so. Directly Mainwaring was out of the way, that happened; for the Whitehavens left the yacht to go round to Naples and accompanied the lordling to Rome.

Meantime Mainwaring was *not* out of the way, and, as Wordsworth said, did not intend. His position, I take it, was the old schoolboy one of 'findings and keepings'. Lady Whitehaven, you will say, had picked him up. Mainwaring did not think so. He considered her advance as a tribute to worth, and might perhaps have gone so far as

to say (if pressed) that really he had picked *her* up. I never saw in any man so cool an assumption of *droit de seigneur*. He attached her to his person, and kept her there. If he chose to be silent, she had to do the talking, and he answered or not, as suited. He was never rude to her, but no courtier. He did not petition for wraps to carry, but held out his hand for them as if they were his appointed duty, his business. Gorges annoyed him, because Gorges was too dull or too arrogant to take any notice of him. He got on very well with Whitehaven—nobody could help that. Whitehaven was so perfectly affable.

But I did get my hour with him. He came to lunch with me in my rooms and talked most of the afternoon. He told me how he had got involved in the Trafalgar Square row. 'I foresaw it, sir, a year before the day, and waited for it. We used to meet, a lot of dockers and myself, at the *Fiddle and Cat* in Limehouse. They elected me a delegate, and I said I'd never fail them. Nor would I, if it hadn't been for your Ferdinand Bergamot and his toy-Socialism. Pikes twisted up in Liberty-silk handkerchiefs! Birks the M.P. is a good man—but timid, sir. Would you talk to twenty thousand hungry men of "Law and Order"?

'The helmet game came to me in a flash, when I saw that we could never get going in earnest. Good fun that was—but not business. We were

past the moment for real work. Bergamot spoilt that for us. He was by twice too long—and flowery, by heaven! He to talk about Thermidor!

‘As for the prison, it did good, sir. My wife felt the disgrace of it—she a young girl whose folk had always been respectable, she said——’

I don’t know why I was surprised to hear of his marriage; but I was, and told him so. He took it calmly.

‘She is at home, with her own people——’ I pictured a mild governess-type, fair and easily flushed, anxious over house-bills; but he went on—

‘Her father is a carter, and her mother does charing and laundry-work. Yes, sir, and Lizzy was on her knees at a doorstep when I first saw her.’

There was nothing to say—and after all, what was there in it? After a pause I muttered something about hoping that she was not there still; but that also he took with a wave of his cigar. ‘She would take no harm by it—on a fine day. She is as strong as a young heifer.’

She was, he said, besides that, the most beautiful woman on earth since the Venus of Milo’s time. ‘You’ll be reminded of that goddess when you see Lizzy.’

I asked him whether she was as good-looking as his hostess of the moment. ‘There’s no comparison possible,’ he told me. ‘Lady Whitehaven

is a lovely woman; Lizzy is a beautiful woman. You cannot compare a star and a rose.'

More came out by degrees. 'She intimidated me, sir. I saw her on her knees, and felt that I must fall on mine. Faith, they were giving way. She was about the house all the morning. She scented and lit it up. I used to see her in the village, afternoons, with her friends. She walked like a young goddess among them, unconscious of her grace. She laughed and talked with them—unconscious condescension. And they took her for their equal. I talked to her. She answered fair and straight. No "sir" to me. She concealed nothing—why should she? A housemaid on her holiday—and tall as a queen. She knocked me out of time. I followed her about—I took her for walks. Love her! I worshipped her. I dreamed of her all night and thought of her all day. What was I to do? I spoke to her mother and terrified the good soul—but I didn't care. I'm not a villain, Whitworth. There was but one thing to be done. Besides, she was a good girl. Cold as spring-water. As pure as the family Bible. Well, I won over the mother, and she tackled her husband for me. He didn't care for it, and I don't blame him. I hadn't a rap—nor had he. But I was not his sort, and he knew that. He didn't want any politics. "Damn my politics," I said. "Mr Matthews, I'll serve your daughter well. If you believe I have a head on me you must know that I shall succeed." He

didn't know but I'd succeed, but it would be a strange world for his Lizzy. There it was. I went back to the mother and battered at her heart. She's an ambitious woman—come of a better race. She thinks she stooped to her good man. Has always looked to her daughters to lift themselves. She has pinched to get them taught. Good manners, good conduct, beauty, grace, they have; but Lizzy is the pride of her heart. Her third girl—and there are three below her. Done on twelve shillings a week and what she can earn for herself. Heavens, she is a masterpiece.

'Then I spoke to Lizzy. She was frightened cold. Wouldn't hear of it. But I stormed her, with her mother's help. She had never had a lover before. She had one then. Beautiful, noble creature! Before I left Merrow she was mine. And she's as poor now as when she was earning her eighteen pounds a year and all found.'

A strange, wild tale—just like him. He was on fire with it before he had finished, and working it in with his schemes to improve the condition of labourers at home, he ended by seeing himself the saviour of society. 'I have done right. You will see for yourself when you come home. What nobler thing can there be than a good and beautiful woman? There are a round ten millions of them in England. Am I their worse champion for holding one of them in my arms? Is the child I shall give her the worse-born? Lizzy, my good

sir, is descended from the primal race of your country. Pure descent—no mixture of blood. My child will have the milk and marrow of Britain in his flesh. Noble through the mother. So it is that nobility should come. I am for the matriarchy since I have known Lizzy.’ He had worked himself up to see no other woman in the world—at the moment.

After that he borrowed a fiver, saying, ‘One must keep up with these gentry—and I have but sixteen shillings in my pocket, barring the price of the ticket home.’ It then appeared that he was leaving in a week. ‘There’s a rumour of trouble in the north, and I must be there.’

‘I think I’ll look in on you in the north,’ I said, ‘and see how you make trouble.’

‘It will be worth it,’ he said; ‘but it will be hungry work.’

‘A strike?’

‘Ah,’ said he, ‘such a strike as will need a man to hold up. I know what I am to do. I shall win, you will see. No fighting or machine-breaking. Just starvation. We’ll shame the Government into action.’

‘And how will you keep ’em at starvation-point?’

He squared his jaw. ‘By starving myself—myself and my young and beautiful wife—of the blood-royal of Britain.’

‘Poor girl,’ I said, but he—

‘Not at all—not at all. Beauty has its business

in the world, as well as its pleasure. Besides, she's used to it.'

You can never tell how a man feels about his wife by the way he speaks about her. Mainwaring's last speech sounded cavalier to me, but I had noticed that he treated Lady Whitehaven in exactly the same fashion. Anyhow, he was conscious of his Lizzy's good looks, and, to me, it was as plain as a pikestaff that her fair ladyship was quite ready to send him back to his Lizzy as soon as might be. She had no further use for him. The comet of a season, or the meteor of an October night, he was now spent, so much dry dust. That was her feeling; but it wasn't Mainwaring's. Mainwaring had no notion of being chucked away like an orange-peel. There he was, there intended to be. He didn't like leaving her at all—he gave her little but scowls and crooked brows for the rest of his time: a queer way of commending himself to a woman already bored with him, but truly a lover's way. She took it like the angel of sweet-temper that she was, and played her two fish beautifully. Gerald Gorges—horrible young prig—was sulky too. He was there to be adored, and, as she was beginning to adore him in very truth, must have cost her dreadful pain. Little he cared for that. But she——! Well, I don't pretend to say that a married woman and a mother ought to be in love with one young man and allow herself to be loved

by another, but I do point out that in pure kindness to Mainwaring she allowed Gerald Gorges to stab her to the heart. What man would do as much for a bower full of women?

Gorges and Mainwaring never spoke to each other. Gorges pretended that Mainwaring did not exist, and Mainwaring showed that he would have trodden Gorges out of life if he had had half a chance. It was pretty comic for lookers-on. Old Whitehaven was always chuckling to himself over it, and once he fairly winked me into a wicked partnership.

Mainwaring grew heavily sentimental as the day drew near, and held her hand in the semi-dark. She oughtn't to have allowed it, but she did. He made no pretence of concealing his feelings now. I heard him say at the theatre—'Then you will write?' He didn't care who heard it. She nodded and smiled, and he leaned back in his chair, satisfied for the moment.

She went to the station to see him off. La Blint was with her, and so was Whitehaven, the old brick. She ought to have been grateful to him for that, but no doubt she would have done as much for him. While we were waiting for the horn Mainwaring had taken the lady away to a remote part of the platform and held her in close talk. I saw his fierce chin, his hectoring forefinger. She seemed to me to cower below him, and reminded me of a wood-pigeon before a large

and very lean tom-cat. Whitehaven saw everything but didn't let on. Miss Blint, I thought, was too scandalised to find small-talk. The ball was kept up between Whitehaven and me. Personally I was wondering what would happen when they parted. Mainwaring was equal to anything, and she not equal to refusing anything. However, he didn't touch her, but came lunging back, slightly in advance of her, and with no more ceremony went through us into his carriage. The *facchino*, hovering about over his hand-luggage, got nothing; we got nothing; the train lumbered out. Mainwaring leaned from the window, nodded impartially to us all—and that was the last of him for the moment.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRIKE AT CULGAITH

WHEN I came back to London in the early summer the Culgaith strike had been going on three weeks. The town was full of it, and the journalists were whirling their words like Moors their matchlocks at a powder-play. Everybody knew Mainwaring's name. He was reported at length, and even the old *Times* had a guarded word or two in praise of his handling of the thing. I saw that he was playing what we now call Passive Resistance; but the puzzle was, not that he kept the Culgaith men from working, but how he prevented other men from taking their place. Picketing was not recognised in my young days, though of course it existed. But for three weeks the pits at Culgaith had been idle, the whole population of Skilaw was starving, and nobody from outside had come in. Mainwaring had drawn a magic circle round Skilaw and Culgaith, and the proprietors seemed to be powerless. The military—that favourite weapon of authority—could not be used, because there was nothing to use them on. And yet the newspapers could tell you nothing of Mainwaring's thaumaturgics.

Greatly interested in it all, I wrote to him at a venture, addressing him simply at Culgaith, Skilaw, Durham, and received a prompt reply in a beautiful, clear hand—certainly not his. He had signed it with a blotted scratch, R.D.B.M. The letter said simply, 'Come up, my dear Whitworth, and see me with the many-headed on a leash. There is nothing to eat; but you can bear for a day and night what we have borne for near a month. These people make me envy their Englishry. I never did that before. By the Lord, sir, they are heroes. I think there will be another fortnight of it—and then we'll roll up the petition and have it over the Commons like a Juggernaut.' On that I went up to stay with some people I knew at Plassenby in the North Riding, and went over to Skilaw in due course.

Anybody who knows East Durham will know what I saw. A long, shallow valley filled from end to end with squalid waste-tips, gaunt cranes like gallows, and the shabby excoria of industry. The hillsides were encrusted with row upon row of one-storeyed hovels, a sordid, hiving town filled up the bottom. Dust and flies thickened the air, and all day the sun struck down through a burning mist. The station was crowded with fixed-eyed and pallid men. The women mostly kept at home. I don't think I saw one in the station.

Mainwaring was speaking somewhere at the time, I was told by an emissary, who directed me

to his lodging in Alma Terrace; half-an-hour's walk for a starving man, said my messenger; 'but *you* could do it in fifteen minutes, maybe.'

I said I should go down and hear Mainwaring speak, and went with my silent friend, threading a way in streets filled with listless, idle people. They all had the slow yet bright eyes of famine. I caught sight of a woman or two, of some children, in doorways, sitting still, staring at nothing in particular, and my heart failed me. 'Good God, what do you all live on?' I asked.

'Our own hearts, mainly,' he told me. 'But we get a little strike-pay yet; and Mr Mainwaring goes round about the countryside, and mostly brings back something for the women.'

'Mr Mainwaring is a brave man.'

'He is that, and he needs to be. There's many would have his life to end the strike.'

'But you think he's right to keep on?'

'Ay, I've never doubted him.'

'He'll not fail if you don't.'

'We shall fail if *he* does.' Then he pointed to a swarming crowd at a street-end. 'He's yonder.' I heard shouts of laughter and applause.

'What is he at?' I wanted to know.

'He's telling them Irish tales,' I was told.

We went as near as we could, and I heard Mainwaring for the first time. He was as lean as a winter wolf, and was standing on a packing-case, from which an extravagant gesture might easily

have upset him. But he used no gestures at all. He had a great slow voice like a foghorn, monotonous in the extreme, but impressive from its very monotony, and, as I afterwards discovered, as apt for tragic or impassioned speech as it was undoubtedly effective for his present purpose—which was to amuse those empty-bellied hordes. Everybody knows an Irish story or two, and I don't pretend to tell his. There was nothing in them. I remember that one was about the young policeman stationed in the Curragh road to prevent racing. He was seen entranced by the outrageous spectacle, his note-book forgotten. 'Begod, that's the best of them yet!' he was heard to cry as one Jchu came tearing through, cutting out or cutting down all rivals. It was that kind of thing—Leveresque farce; but told with a brogue, a twinkle and a happy malice I never heard equalled. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply, his audience a boundless appetite. I don't know how long he had been at it—but I'm sure I had three-quarters of an hour of it. My friend from the station told me that he filled up the mornings that way, and kept his serious talk for the afternoons. In the evenings he went out visiting. He had the whole thing in hand, and all the Union officials were at his call. 'We never had a man to touch him; we never learned of such a man outside a picture-book. Wherever he goes in the county of Durham it's the same thing.'

'Is that how he prevented the blacklegs from coming in?'

'Ay, just that. He heard tell that a party of them was coming in from Armfield Plain, so he went to the Junction and spoke to them on the platform. The police was all there, and heard him; but he never said a word they could take hold of. They all went back to Armfield by the next train. They tried it on with men from Tyneside after that, and had the company run a special through to Skilaw. He met them in the station-yard, when they refused him entry to the platform. They all went back home again—every man of them.'

'He's a man,' I said.

'He is that. Some say he's more. If he wins through this bout it's my belief he'll be chosen for every seat in the county at the next election.'

'One will be enough, even for Mr Mainwaring, I thought; but Mainwaring's admirer must have the last word.

'He'd fill three, would Mr Mainwaring.'

I made way through the press of pale and glazed-eyed men and met the hero in the midst. He was as thin as a shotten herring, and had hunger in his eyes. His dry lips gleamed gray through his black beard and moustache. I said, 'Mainwaring, you're killing yourself,' but he turned it off. 'I'll kill some of the Syndicate first,' he said. 'We haven't got to grips yet.'

'If you can last out at this present game,' I said, 'you are bound to win without a drop of blood.'

'Well, that's my plan,' he said. 'I've heard that they are meeting the Member to-day.'

'Do they meet him here?' Mainwaring stared.

'Here! Never in the world. He'd as soon meet in a bee-swarm. It would take more than twenty of me to save him whole. The women would tear his entrails out.'

'The women don't show up.'

'They cannot. They've sold nearly every rag that covers them, and children are being born dead every day. We send a list of them to the Syndicate—one to every member of it.'

'Oh,' I said, 'you have them.'

Mainwaring sucked at his lips. 'If we live to see it. But by God we are fairly famished here. Come home with me now and see my poor Lizzy. Saint Elizabeth of Hungry I call her, God forgive me.'

'God will forgive all your jokes in this battle,' I said. 'I felt the tragedy all through your good stories.'

'Those are the best things I ever got out of Ireland,' said he. 'I've been at them now for ten days, and never told the same tale twice.'

Alma Terrace, blistering on the hillside, and full of flies, took us a good half-hour of climbing, so much we were beset by anxious strikers. A

baby ill, a baby dead, a woman in delirium, a child fainting at school. Heartrending—but Mainwaring listened to every account without blenching, decided each on its merits, prescribed the doctor to be sent for, the chemist where *there was a credit given* (there were two doctors and two chemists bold enough to serve), and took down names for extra rations that evening. Then we stooped at a low open door, and saw Mrs Mainwaring at a wash-tub in the back kitchen.

He had not spoken wildly, for once. She was a beautiful young woman, though she was wofully pale now, and as thin as a rake. Truly she had the round small head, broad shoulders and noble bust of the Venus, but she was dark-haired and dark-hued, with a pair of gray-green eyes ringed with black of extraordinary directness and intensity. As is always the case with the real working-class, her manners were unembarrassed and simple. I find that the highest and the lowest are so—the highest, I suppose, because they don't care to be anything but themselves, the lowest because they don't dare. It is the middle-classes which make you uncomfortable because they can never be simple.

Mrs Mainwaring deprecated my offered hand by showing me her sudded pair, and then waited for me to say something. She smiled at hunger. 'Oh, that's nothing to me. Often and often, when I was a child, we had nothing in the house but stale crusts and a cold potato or two. The crusts

got so hard that we used to soak them in water and drink them. But Mr Mainwaring's not like me. It hurts him. It's bad for him. Why, look at all the work he does. I do mind that.'

I said, 'He's doing great things. He's showing himself a great man. You are proud of him.'

She didn't admit it. 'It's better to be contented than talked about. Of course, he is helping the people. I don't know where they would be without him—now.'

'What do you mean by—now?'

Her eyes brooded. 'Well,' she said slowly, 'I don't know that I ought to say it—but they were earning three times what my father earned before this began, and working almost half the hours.'

She wouldn't say any more; but I was struck by what she said. Mainwaring came down at that moment, his hands washed, and we sat down to what there was to eat.

We dined on stale bread, potatoes, and tea. Mainwaring had no money, and had been accorded strike-pay with the pitmen. He munched contentedly enough, talking fiercely throughout of what he should do—never of what he had done. His wife ate little, but made the most of her tea. She was in plain black, with a large white apron. She bore her discomfort and the squalor of her surroundings with a simple dignity which I admired extremely. I discovered another point of resemblance with the grandees in the way she and her husband took each other for granted.

They reminded me of the Whitehavens, and that sort of couple with whose ways I was so far much more familiar—indeed, I don't know that I had ever met one of Lizzy Mainwaring's nation on such terms before. Middle-class women will sulk half the evening if their men are not lover-like, with flowers to bring home, or a 'Not tired, dearest?' They have a preconception, set up a standard. Neither the Whitehavens nor the Mainwarings bother themselves with such 'gear. Mrs Mainwaring didn't ask him what his work for the afternoon was, and when he mentioned it, it was only to disburden himself, not to set her up with the knowledge. He had a committee, and two meetings to go to, and all his morning's post to deal with at night. She, so far as I could make out, had nothing to do but to write at his dictation.

He went off to his committee, pretty well as hungry as he had come home, and his wife cleared the table and washed up. She smilingly declined my offer of help, but allowed me to put plates on the rack. When all that was done, the fire made up, and the kettle put on, she took her apron off and sat quietly down with her needlework. I saw what she was making, and indeed there were other signs.

I had been brought up in the country, and was accustomed to country people; but, as I have said, I had never been in such a relationship as this to a country girl. It is curious how we are

regulated at every turn in England by class-prejudice. I have been attracted by a pretty face often enough; I may have paid a servant a compliment and relished her blushes. There has always been condescension implied and understood. Here for the first time in my life I met a peasant girl on equal terms. I felt it, I felt it a privilege, and took pains to deserve it. I did my utmost to talk to her as if she had been, say, Lady Whitehaven. But I don't like to say that I succeeded. At the time, I felt that I was a dead failure. She was guarded in what she said, without seeming to be so. Short of cross-examination I did not see how I was to make her talk. Here Mainwaring was much more successful, with his brusque cavaliering, than I was. He took her beauty for granted; I seemed to deprecate it by everything I said to her. And yet—she has told me since that she had been touched by my behaviour. 'You seemed to understand me. I wanted to tell you everything. As it was, I told you more than I ought.'

She meant, I suppose, that she had told me, from her own point of view, more or less what he had told me. Her courtship and marriage, for instance. 'It was all done in a rush. I didn't know that he cared for me like that. I hadn't thought about it. I was in no hurry to get married. He asked me to walk with him, and Mother thought I had better go. So I went. Then he asked me to marry him, and I said, It

can't be right. Mother and Father didn't agree about it. But Mother was always looking for ways to rise.'

'You were happy as you were, then?'

'Yes, I was happy. I liked my work, and there was always home to look forward to. Now it is all dark. I don't know my way about.'

'You have no home yet?'

'We have been in lodgings in London mostly. Mr Mainwaring has been away very much. We have been married a year nearly. When this strike is over I expect we shall go to London again, unless——' There she stopped, and I knew what she meant. The great event of her life, that for which Nature made her, could not be far off.

I talked to her about her husband, told her of my early acquaintance with him, and of what promise he seemed full. She heard me, without much enthusiasm, I thought. 'Yes, he is very clever. He has a great power over other people. I know that. But——'

'But—what?'

She grew vehement, shook her head. 'It frightens me. I'm not fit for that life. How should I be?' I thought that she pitied herself. Her eyes were full. She recovered, however, in a moment. 'I ought not to tell you that. Don't think of it, please.

'I am trying to learn French,' she told me. 'He helps me when he has time. Not now, of

course. Just now I write his letters for him in the evenings.'

'You write a beautiful hand,' I said.

'Yes, but I am too slow. I want to learn shorthand. I wish I had done that at school. Mother saved the money to send me to the High School. Just think of that—out of twelve shillings a week, and what she made herself! They taught me all sorts of things there—algebra and history and literature. Shorthand would have been more useful to me now.'

'I am sure you won't be sorry for what you learned there,' I said.

'No, no. It has helped me. But——' She sighed.

Obviously the poor girl was not happy, nor was it easy to see how she could have been. If there had been passion at work, if she had been in love with him, there would have been something. But it did not seem to me that she was at all in love with Mainwaring. He was, or had been, in love with her. Anyhow, he had wanted her—and that, with such a man, means passion. Now try to strike a balance. If Mainwaring had had passion, he had known ecstasy. If she had had none, what had she gained? Not happiness, which maybe she was not prepared for; but not comfort either. Comfort is what her people revel in. They appreciate it deeply. It means, in a word, security and a little over. Work within and to the limit of their powers; kindness, regularity; a

steady supply of children and wherewithal to nourish them. I don't suppose Lizzy Matthews in her dreams found anything more in life. It is the utmost dream of a nesting bird. Well, her grief, as I seemed to read her, was that she had no comfort, because no security. She was to work at what she did not understand; she had no prospect of either home or means. Here she was, with a baby on the way, and nothing to feed it upon.

For Mainwaring, she gave me to understand, had had no money when he married her, except the few guineas he earned by journalism, and none now but what the miners allowed him. Strike-pay, in fact! His future might be a glorious one. But she didn't want glory. She wanted a home.

I tried to encourage her. 'Oh, but,' I said, 'if your husband sees this Strike through, he's a made man. He will be elected Member of Parliament, and the Union will give him a salary.'

She admitted it. 'Yes, I know that. They have told him that already. But it will be very strange to me. I don't know how I am to face all the people he will have to do with—grand ladies and—lords and such-like. There's a lady in London now who writes to him every week. She says that she wants to see me; but I can't believe it.'

'I think I know that lady,' I said. 'If it is Lady Whitehaven, I am certain that she is telling the truth.' But Elizabeth looked incredulous.

'My husband writes to her, I know, and she answers him. There's no reason why she should want to see me. He has told her what I was—I gave him no peace until he did.'

'You were perfectly right,' I said. 'I don't doubt that Lady Whitehaven would like to know you, on that ground as much as any other. Don't imagine for a moment that she gives herself airs. I assure you that she is a very honest person, with friends all over the world, and in every walk in life. She admires your husband's talents, and befriended him when he came out of prison because she knew that he had suffered in a good cause. If you will let me give you some advice, you will get to know Lady Whitehaven. She is a good soul—and, remember, it is very difficult for her sort to get in touch with you and me.'

She said nothing, but pressed her lips together and looked far through the open door to the hazy hillside. I don't for a moment think she was jealous of Lady Whitehaven. I don't think she resented Mainwaring's letter-writing—which she evidently knew had drawn the lady's letters in reply. What I do rather think is that she felt Mainwaring and such people to be birds of a feather, and distrusted her own quieter plumage. As I had foreseen, however, Lady Whitehaven was much too intelligent, and much too generous, to be mistaken in Lizzy Mainwaring. They did become friends, and shared confidences which would have disconcerted anybody but Mainwaring

himself. They might have made the Grand Turk blush. But that comes later.

She gave me tea at five o'clock, and I stayed with her till my last train went. Through her broken utterances, her sighs, her hopeless searching of the sky I conceived a pity for her almost amounting to horror. I have seen a thrush in winter, frozen tame, crouched against the wall, waiting bright-eyed for death. So she seemed to me. She never alluded to herself, except once when she said that she had thought of going out to work again. She added to that, 'But it's rather difficult just now.' She fell into long silences towards the end of my stay, and in spite of all I could do was despondent and near to tears. I thought of her, as Mainwaring had seen her first, in her beauty and strength, rejoicing in her work, innocent, without a care in the world. I thought that to take a fair young creature like that, and give her children, surround her with comfort and happiness, was a career for a man. I thought that I might have been that man. I was romantic in those days—and I become so again as I remember them.

I don't think I was in love with her, but I know that I was deeply interested. Perhaps she knew it, and was grateful to me. She didn't want me to go.

'He won't be in till eight,' she said, 'and then there will be all these letters, after he has had his supper. He hasn't opened them yet.'

I thought that we could open them, and save him time by sorting them out, but, oh, no, that wouldn't do at all. 'I never open his letters.'

When it was absolutely time for me to go she grew so pensive that I felt a great longing to help her. 'How shall I know how things are going with you? I shall want to hear that you are well, and happier than you are now.'

She looked at me. 'Shall you really? I will write, then, if I may.'

'Please write to me.' I wrote down my address. I hoped that she would let me call when she was in London. 'I shall see you a member of Parliament's lady before very long.'

'I shall never be that,' she said, 'though I am his wife.'

'You will disappoint your mother, and your husband too. You would not fail your husband?'

She answered with dry heat. 'He knew what I was. He saw me scrubbing the doorstep. Why didn't he think? He is very clever. I could work to the bone for him—but I can't do what he wants me to do. I would work for the poor, as I do. I know what it is to be poor, and I know that the poor must help each other—— So we do. But he wants something which I can't give him.'

She gave me her hand, and stood in the doorway looking after me. I turned at the corner of the terrace, and saw her there yet. Pale face, rueful figure, sad eyes. I took off my hat, she lifted her hand. I hope she knew me for a friend.

I have said that I was not in love with her, but I am not so sure. I was a romantic youth, all the more so for being a shy one. Shyness drives the passion inwards and hardens, while it deepens, the root of it. But if I was in love with her, it was not by any means by reason of her beauty, nor altogether because I pitied her, nor, again, by admiration of the patient dignity with which she bore her misfortunes. It was the sharp isolation in which she was placed which fixed my attention first upon her. It was her whole allure : she was beautiful; she was unfortunate; she was out of my world altogether. Yet she was intensely a woman, and made me feel intensely a man. She was, in fact, an elemental—and before her mere humanity the trappings of my caste fell from me. I stood, man, before her, man's mate, in the primæval wild.

Lizzy made no compromise with life : she was woman through and through, nesting woman. I think that nothing entered into her view of the scheme of things, but to work and to have children. I was to know that she could love, but not yet. One other thing she knew, one other law of being. Duty. Whether she had religion or not, I am not clear. She used to go to church; it soothed her and in a way helped her in her dreary life. She said her prayers, she read her Bible, she respected the clergy as a class apart. But duty to her was a way of life. She could not transgress by a hair's-breadth. Not only so, but the language of

transgression, however qualified, would be impossible to her. She had been given to Mainwaring in church. Why? Because he had asked for her. Well, then, she belonged to Mainwaring. As long as he lived she was at his call. She could not, perhaps, be happy with him; she could not, certainly, be happy without him, so long as he was there. She had married him without love—that couldn't be helped. She must do without love. All that I saw; and though I did not understand it I could not but admire the manifestation of it, so deeply felt, so bravely faced by this fine creature.

Mainwaring was booming tragi-heroics in the Square as I went down to the station through the hot dusk.

CHAPTER V

THE PETITION AND THE RETURN

MAINWARING, who brought a schoolboy zest for preposterous joking into everything he did, enjoyed himself hugely over the Culgaith petition. It had been preparing when I had been up there in the summer, was ready by the beginning of August, and was presented before the House rose. He had been promised that it should be the biggest thing of the kind ever got into St Stephen's, and I dare say it was. Allenby told me all the news from day to day; you know how scandal and gossip, those two chinning hags, pile up detail. It was brought up to them in a milk-van, met at King's Cross by deputations of dockers, railway-men, gas-fitters, boiler-makers, and riveters, and escorted across London with banners, conveyed itself in a wagon and six dray horses. Mainwaring and six of the strikers came with it.

Bill Birks, Moresby, Coward and some others of their kidney met them in Palace Yard and took the convoy into the lobby; vast crowds guarded the mountainous cylinder outside. Heaven was with them, for one of the Culgaith men fainted in the lobby, and fell heavily. Sheer hunger, not a

doubt of it. Birks made the most of that for the benefit of the Commons, and did it so well that sympathy resulted instead of exasperation. The petition was received, and for a good half-hour the House was like a National School-yard at eleven o'clock in the morning. Good-humour, tolerance, brotherly love prevailed. All to the good. At night there was a dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern; the whole of the Radical party there; a speech from Mainwaring which Allenby told me was massive and concrete, but made into kind of pudding-stone by jokes and epigrams. Six hundred pounds was collected in the room for Culgaith. Mainwaring and his men had a great send-off in the morning. Personally, I saw next to nothing of him, for I don't like being cut by exalted demagogues and I knew what kind of a state of mind had possession of Mainwaring at such a crisis. But I sought out his route to King's Cross on the morning of his return, and had a glimpse of him standing up in an open barouche, his hat in his hand, his white face fixed to a plastered grin; only his sunken eyes alive. I have seen dervishes escorted into Oriental towns, so transfigured by starvation and mania—Mainwaring was just like any one of them. The pity of it was, to me, that the whole thing was a bit of self-seeking of his own.

As everybody will remember who is as old as I am, something was done for Culgaith. Pressure

was brought to bear upon the owners, who gave way. Mainwaring was a great man all over the North, and a marked man, to say the least of it, in the South. At the General Election fifteen months later, he was returned unopposed for the division in which Skilaw stands and swinks. I saw very little of him, as he remained in the North, but I heard that his child was born dead in the November following his London excursion, and wrote to his wife to say how much I felt for her—or, rather, to conceal how much I felt for her. She didn't answer.

I admired her so much for what she was that I should have been sorry, I believe, if she *had* answered. Letters of that sort, amiable nothings-at-all, were plainly not within the scope of her being. But I wanted to be in touch with her somehow, even through Mainwaring if there were no other way; so said the only thing I could, short of going up to the North (which I feared might affront her), and made the best of my slight acquaintance with the Whitehavens. I visited that random haunt of pleasure and ease—where the master of the house never was and where the mistress of it was never alone—and got a snatch or two of news.

The lady was in the flutter of a full-fledged love-affair. I heard a great deal more of Gerald Gorges than of Mainwaring, but the two were intertwined—so I got something. She was curious about his wife, had heard that she was—'not

quite'; perhaps I knew her? I said that I did, and that I thought her the most beautiful young woman in the world. Lady Whitehaven immediately warmed to her. 'How delightful! I must get her here. I'll tell Richard to bring her.'

Richard!

I said, 'Richard would do it. He admires her himself; he's proud of her. But she won't come, you'll see.' Lady Whitehaven put her pretty head on one side, and looked like a wilting rose.

'I see, I see. That will be very troublesome of her. I do so love having beautiful people about me. Couldn't *you* persuade her? Tell her that I'm quite kind, and all that sort of thing.'

'You could persuade her better than I could,' I told her. 'I suppose Mainwaring will get in—then he'll have to come to London.'

'Oh,' she said, 'of course he'll come to London. He has promised.'

'He would,' I said. 'If he brings his wife with him, perhaps you'll call on her.'

She said that she certainly would, and wanted to know more about her. I didn't feel at liberty to oblige her to that extent, but did give her to understand that Mainwaring had fallen wildly in love, and had carried Lizzy off her feet. That her ladyship had no difficulty about. 'He's so impulsive, isn't he? He can't bear to be denied anything. And quite irresistible when he has really made up his mind.' She pinched her lower lip with her thumb and finger. 'It will be rather

difficult—but I shall be so sorry for her that I believe I shall succeed. You know I am rather used to having my own way, too.'

I said that I was sure of it, but added something about stone walls and injury to the toes. Lady Whitehaven gently sighed and looked about to see if Gerald Gorges had come in. He had. I saw him in the distance, a good head above anyone else, looking like a very handsome and sulky giraffe. Then she saw him also, and a lovely blush flooded her as her eyes fell before his—one of the prettiest things I ever saw—and she a mother of four children, the eldest nearly out of the schoolroom. She recovered in a moment and got rid of me charmingly. Soon after that I saw them together, the world forgetting, but not by the world forgot—for the world was by this time openly aware of what was going on, and as pleased about it as a child with a new toy. Such was, in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be that particular world.

Gerald Gorges' return to London synchronised within a few months with Mainwaring's return to Parliament, which was unfortunate in one way, because it brought to a head matters which weren't ready for that violent solution. The lady wanted Mainwaring to impend, but here he was on Gerald Gorges' toes like a ton of bricks. She wanted the young man to be uneasy; but he was disgusted. He knew only too well what was due to himself;

he was so clear about that as to allow it wholly to obscure what he owed to her. So he obstinately and obdurately ignored Mainwaring's scowls and hands deeply thrust in his breeches' pockets, and made it difficult for Lady Whitehaven to have them both in the room together. To save herself she handed him over to her sister Leven, who made much of him after her manner and kept open house for him. Mainwaring accepted her as a gift, but did not on her account cease to besiege the lady of his heart.

The very first time I met him was in Cavendish Square; and the first thing he said to me was—'We are in lodgings in Chelsea. Lizzy is moping like a sick hen. I hope you'll go and see her.'

I said, 'Certainly I shall. But you have no business to let her mope.' He stared at me as if I was suddenly a fool, then cleared his face of scorn and said, 'She won't come here. You may make her, the Lady may make her—but I can't. And I think she's quite right.'

So did I, and I said so. The question, however, had been, Was *he* quite right? That he thought fit to pass over. He gave me the address—Tedworth Square—and dropped me and the subject. No—he spoke of himself, I remember. He had taken his seat and was meditating a maiden speech. The lady was going to hear him, and would take Lizzy, if Lizzy would go. He strongly thought that she wouldn't.

It was a sunny afternoon in June when I went to see her. Exactly a year since Culgaith. She was out, but I waited, and presently she came in. She had been buying flowers. She had a broad-brimmed black straw hat, a plain black cotton frock, and looked divine. Her dark skin flushed with pleasure, her green eyes shone. There was no doubt she was glad to see me, though of course she didn't say so. I had brought her some roses, and was rewarded by seeing her handle them. She chose one for her gown, and put the others in water—silently, very intent upon the matter, and I think with no thought that I was watching her. I didn't want her to talk—there was plenty of time for that; but I did want to look at her.

She fetched me tea herself, and the landlady came back with some of the refreshment, a sharp-faced but pleasant London woman, who said at once how nice it was to have a little company. 'We don't see much of Mr Mainwaring, do we?' she said to Lizzy, I thought rather provocatively; but it didn't draw any answer.

Over the tea-cups the poor girl was moved to talk to me of her loss. 'I wanted Mother very badly,' she said, 'but some of the people up there were as kind as could be. I felt leaving it up there. It was a horrible place.' She added, with a little gasp of sorrow, 'And I wasn't the only one to lose my baby in Skilaw.'

One knew all about that, and rather dreaded the reflection that Mainwaring's responsibility was

heavy. I suspected that she quite realised that, and got her off the rueful subject as soon as I could. I wanted to know now what she proposed to do with herself in London; she couldn't tell me.

'He wants you to go about with him, no doubt,' I said. She busied herself with her teaspoon.

'I don't know that he does,' she said presently, 'but I have told him that I won't go to his great houses, if they ask me.' Then she looked straight at me. 'I expect you think I am wrong?'

I said, 'No, no, I think you are right—until you are quite sure how you will be received. But there are people among them, you know, who couldn't go wrong in that kind of thing if they tried. His Lady Whitehaven is one—the kindest woman in London.'

Lizzy's fine nostrils dilated. 'I daresay she is kind enough.'

'She will call on you pretty soon, you'll find,' I told her.

'I can't prevent that,' Lizzy said, 'and why should I? But she won't get me to her house. There is no reason in it. I told Mr Mainwaring so.'

'I am sure it would please him if you could make a friend of her,' I said.

She answered me coldly, looking carefully away from me. 'He thinks a great deal of Lady Whitehaven—and she likes it. She is kind-hearted, and doesn't want me to think there's anything in it.'

'Nor is there,' I said—sinning against the light.

She laughed: not happily. 'Oh, I'm not jealous. He might go and see her every day. Perhaps he does. But I don't care to help them, exactly.'

Then I tried to put it another way. 'No, you don't care to help an idle flirtation—but you do care to help your husband. Lady Whitehaven can be very useful to him.'

She wouldn't have that; she was much too candid. 'No,' she said, 'he didn't go into Parliament to help her party. He went in to help poor people. Only the poor can help the poor—I'm sure of it. He went in as a working-man, though he has never been one. She will put him in the wrong—or he will put himself there. You'll see.'

'Well, then,' I said, 'let's face it. You won't know his friends, and have none of your own. What will you do?'

She seemed to have made up her mind. 'I shall get some work presently, through a clergyman or someone. Besides, I do a great deal for Mr Mainwaring. We can't afford a secretary. I shall learn typewriting and shorthand, if I can manage them. I expect I can.'

I didn't think I had been getting on with her. It seemed to me as if I was pumping her, and that she unwillingly replied; but then I was very much flattered. She began to talk about affairs, and I saw that I had gained her confidence. Nothing ever made me happier than that. Mainwaring

had £150 a year allowed him by the Executive of the constituency; he made perhaps another £150 by journalism. It could have been much more, but he would not give the time to it. Meantime he spent nearly twice that, was in debt and had no prospect of getting out of it. She was awfully worried. In the middle of all this Mainwaring came in, and fixed us with his glazed, cavernous eyes.

But he was glad to see me, and very nearly said so. He walked over to Lizzy where she sat, still before the tea-tray, and put his hand on her shoulder. 'My poor girl, this is good seeing. So he has been amusing you? Now, I'll not be interrupting you. I am only on a flying visit.'

She sat under his caressing hand, looking down at her own which were idle, twisting together in her lap. I asked him if the House was up; he said, No; but he had come home to change. 'I'm dining out, to tell you the truth,' he said. 'I'll ask my girl to get my things out, and some hot water, and then I must get back.'

She rose at once, and his arm slipped to her waist, and held her. 'She won't come with me by any persuasion of mine,' he said. 'Perhaps you will have better luck. Not but what she'd have a dull time with the peacocks and popinjays I have to meet.'

'We can imagine you pranking with the best of them,' I said. He heard me, but took no notice. His looks were bent to his wife's averted cheek.

'Run, my darling, and get my things for me. I mustn't wait.'

She went away at once, and he prepared to follow her. At the door he turned to me.

'You see, I am learning my weights and measures. I know more than I did yesterday—and so it goes on. I'm creeping up—and soon I shall shoot ahead.'

'It's dull for your wife,' I said.

He wagged his head. 'You know what she was. A home-keeping bird. 'Tis the nest, the nest, with her nation.'

'Get her a nest, then, confound you,' was in my head—but he had gone.

I thought that I had better go too, but waited to say good-bye to Lizzy. She came down after a short interval and stood by me, listening while I talked. My proposals for her entertainment hereafter met with little encouragement. It was clear to me that her only chance was to have another baby and a house of her own. She was—Mainwaring was perfectly right—a nesting bird. Thousands of years had gone to the producing of her. I praise God that it is so. So my proffer of a married sister, a perfectly good sort, of a parson's wife in Chelsea, an old friend of ours, and the like, fell rather flat. I didn't venture to propose taking her out much. She would have come; but people would have talked; and when she knew that she wouldn't like it. So my conversation was futile—yet I didn't want to go, and

she didn't want me to. We fell to silences, chance sentences not needing an answer, making of talk, seeing the pretence, but each glad that the other saw it. I was in love with her; probably she suspected it. It may have soothed her innocent vanity—I don't know.

Then Mainwaring came blundering downstairs—he was much too tall for the stairs, and a ridiculous thing happened. He got into the room, looking (for him) remarkably combed and harmonious, and was preparing to be off when he found he had forgotten his handkerchief. Bolting out of the room, he slammed the door after him. We heard a struggle, a tearing, a rending, a prodigious crack—then silence. Presently he came in again, a coat-tail in his hand. 'That was a relief,' he said. 'Something was bound to go, and it couldn't have been me.'

'It might have been the door,' I said, but he had turned to his wife.

'My darling,' he said, 'just fetch a couple of black safety-pins. We'll soon have this put right.'

Lizzy looked her disapproval. 'No, no; I must sew it.'

He wouldn't have that. 'I tell you I can't wait. You must do as I tell you. Otherwise I shall go with one tail.'

We knew very well that he would have done it. So Lizzy fetched the pins, and so patched up off he went to the House and to the Whitehavens.

He was at a party of the Duchess's later on in the evening, and, I was not surprised to hear, made no secret of his accident. But Lizzy had been scandalised. The question of how far a man, of genius or not, can have a beautiful woman as the slave of his whims, ambitions, absurdities or blunders need not now be discussed. I remember how hotly it blazed within me that night. But I had become a partisan.

CHAPTER VI

IN AND OUT OF THE HOUSE

THE time and the occasion of his maiden speech having been decided upon, Mainwaring most characteristically rushed into debate many days before the appointed day, unprepared, in a savage temper, and not to be restrained. A question, and then a motion for adjournment, about flogging in the army stirred his bile. In a moment he was up, all the length of him rocking like a tree, lecturing the House about man's essential dignity. He quoted Pico della Mirandola (of all heroes dead in the world) with great and incisive effect. Even in print the words can move me. 'Neither a fixed abode, nor a form in thine own likeness, nor any gift peculiar to thyself alone, have we given thee, O Adam, in order that what abode, what likeness, what gifts thou shalt choose, may be thine to have and to possess. . . . I have set thee midmost the world, that there thou mightest the more conveniently survey whatsoever is in the world . . . to the end that thou, being thy own free maker and moulder, shouldst fashion thyself in what form may like thee best. Thou shalt have power to decline into the lower

or brute creatures. Thou shalt have power to be re-born unto the higher, or divine, according to the sentence of thy intellect! Thus to Man at his birth the Father gave seeds of all variety and germs of every form of life.'

In the eighteen-eighties the House had not quite lost touch with the glamour of the seventeen-eighties. Facts tell now; in those days style did much of the business. The zest and the manner have gone, not to return. Burke would be a bore to-day, Sheridan would be called a coxcomb. When Mainwaring made his first speech his vehemence and apparent sincerity, coupled with eloquence and the tinge of learning imparted by a happily-remembered quotation had the power to impose. The House was ruled by two great men who both had scholarship. Hardman led the opposition, in which, of course, Mainwaring ranked; Bentivoglio was First Lord: Hardman with the angry, intent eyes of some accipitrine fowl, sitting coucht in his place; Bentivoglio with his sick-smiling mask, weary and inexpressive, over against him, always ready for him, with velvet gloves over his claws. Almost everything said or done there then was, as it were, a prelude to a single combat between those two. Now, on this occasion, as I was told, Hardman was annoyed with his henchman. He did not detect prelude, and did smell rebellion. Mainwaring had arranged nothing with the Whips; he had just plunged in, and could hardly have been stopped. That upset

old Hardman's ideas of party discipline. Therefore he took no notice whatever when Mainwaring bounced down as suddenly as he had bounced up, and a roar of applause followed. That was Bentivoglio's cue. He took occasion to compliment the Honourable Member upon a 'speech of unpremeditated eloquence, of scholarship in happy union with passion,' and did not fail to say how 'precious' it must have been to the Right Honourable gentleman upon the other side. The Right Honourable gentleman sat on like a wicked old stone eagle.

In the opinion of good judges Mainwaring hardly, in the House of Commons, surpassed that outburst—except, of course, once. Certainly I thought his official maiden-speech laboured, pompous, and dull. I don't know what his wife thought of it, but remember how she described the effect upon her of that, her only visit to the House.

'They were only playing,' she said, after she had been silent for some time. 'I don't care to go there any more—but it was very kind of Lady Whitehaven to take me.'

Lady Whitehaven had called upon her and, as I had expected, Lizzy couldn't help liking her. I guessed—but didn't know it certainly for a long time—that the simpleton had read the complicated lady like a scented manuscript; I mean that the perfume did not in the least obscure the sense, 'She's not happy—she wants it both ways.' That

was one of Lizzy's comments. Another was, 'I have made up my mind. I won't have anything to do with it. I never will.' She meant that she would be secretary, drudge, bondmaid to the man who had married her, but no more. She would not rise with him—if it *was* rising. She did not herself, at any time, admit the elevation. 'He could do good to the poor in Parliament, but not in that way,' was one of her shots at explanation of herself. 'Only the poor can help the poor.' She had said that before; it was the root of her belief. When I said that to cut the classes inevitably apart was to despair of a happy nation, since there must be rich and not so rich, she took me up. 'Why must there be? Christ didn't think so.' Then I saw that she was an idealist without knowing it, and was ashamed.

'It comes to this, then,' I said to her. 'Lady Whitehaven must come to you in her troubles, for you will never go to her.'

'Yes,' said Lizzy; 'she must step down since I can't step up.'

'And you, in your troubles, will never trouble her.'

She laughed uneasily, as if to cover up her troubles. 'No, I shan't go to her.'

After that I was complimented by the fact that she gave me her confidence freely; her doubts and difficulties were increasing. 'He's so extravagant,—you don't know. We are in debt to the

landlady, and he simply won't listen to her when she comes with her book.' I remembered the waiters at Marseilles and his way of roughriding them. 'I got money from my mother to pay some of it,' she went on, 'out of the Savings Bank. But it can't be right.'

'It isn't right at all,' I said, 'but it will probably come right. He is bound to rise. He can't help it, and it is only a question just now of hanging on.'

To poor Lizzy this was not so plain. 'He gets three pounds a week from the Union, and makes almost as much again from the newspapers. But it all melts away like cat-ice. He makes more in a week than we at home could have saved in a year—and doesn't pay his bills.'

'You hate all that?'

'Oh, hate it!' She bit her lip. 'Well, we never expect much out of life, do we?' The philosophy of the poor! No comfort for Lizzy's nation in finding out whether you hate a thing or not. But she tempered it to me presently by a very pathetic touch. 'I did expect that my baby would have been born alive.'

I think the passion for making people happy was born in me; an instinct, perhaps. I felt at this moment that nothing in the world mattered to me except to make Lizzy Mainwaring happy—but what could I do? Mainwaring stood in my way. Supposing I had paid her bills for her, it would only have been paying Mainwaring's bills—and to do that would have been like pouring

wine into the Thames at London Bridge. As a matter of fact, he already owed me some fifty pounds or so—but that isn't the question really. A few pounds more or less would neither stop Mainwaring nor help Lizzy. He was on the make, so obviously on it that it seemed like combating a law of Nature to try to reduce him to the convenience of a woman. If Lizzy Mainwaring, Rose Whitehaven, a respectable landlady, a hardworking mother-in-law with a stockingful of money in Sussex were but grist for his mill, in they must go. So it seemed then.

The leopard had not changed his spots. Mainwaring was exactly as I had known him five or six years ago. Money to him was nothing. If he had it he got on rather faster, if he had it not, he got on rather slower—but he always got on. I did not know then—I did afterwards—what he spent it on : entertaining he didn't as yet attempt, and as for entertaining himself, he was perfectly indifferent what he ate or drank. He dressed simply, and expected his wife to look nice. I am sure that between them they didn't spend a hundred a year on clothes. But he was lavish with his half-crowns; he took a number of cabs; if he wanted a book he ordered it; if he wanted to go anywhere he went, and in the first class. He belonged to clubs. Ten pounds a week will go easily in this way—and that's five hundred a year on nothing, as you may say. To Lizzy, poor dear, this was frightful—she didn't stay to reflect

that in marrying a gentleman she had mated herself to no more than a gentleman's habits. I suppose she should be blamed for doing it—but when she said that she hadn't been able to help it, I myself can well believe it. At this moment of which I am writing she was no more than twenty-two, and had had three years' pretty intolerable misery. However, to cut all that short, I couldn't stand it. She was wearing herself to fiddlestrings over nothing at all. I spoke to the landlady, who was quite reasonable over it, and made myself more or less responsible for her book. Finally I spoke to Lizzy herself, and saw her eyes fill. She didn't trust herself to speak, and when she did said something about not being able to look at me again. 'Isn't it better to be indebted to a friend than to a landlady?' I asked her. Yes, she supposed so. 'And may I not call myself your friend?' Then she faintly smiled. 'You mean that I may?' She nodded. When I went away she came to the door with me. 'You are good. It makes me happy. I shall tell Mr Mainwaring.' 'Do,' I said. 'That will make him happy too.' She shook her head. 'He won't care.' And of course he didn't.

Lizzy kept her word and was never inside the Whitehavens' mansion; nevertheless the countess needed her, and therefore was pretty often in Chelsea. She was able to clear her own conscience, but in one way only. It became convenient

for her to tell Lizzy the truth, that Mainwaring was no longer necessary to her happiness, but on the contrary a decided impediment to it. I know now that she told the whole state of the case about Gerald Gorges, and that by appealing frankly for pity, obtained it. I understand now, again, why the Duchess made so much of the man: it was because she detested Gerald Gorges and saw Mainwaring a spoke in his wheel. But none of this was explained at the time to Lizzy, because poor Lady Whitehaven imagined that her sister saw the demagogue as admirable and interesting a figure as she herself saw him. And that leads me to a curious little incident of which I was accidentally a witness.

I happened upon the two women together one afternoon, entering unannounced, as I did sometimes when the maid-servant was ashamed to show herself, poor child. Lady Whitehaven had Lizzy's hand between her own, and was looking up at her from the stool on which she sat, all flame-colour and ardour. Lizzy, her junior by ten years, was speaking incisively, and with a scorn which sadly discountenanced the lady. 'Oh, him! He only works for himself.' To one who demands *couleur de rose* for her daily bread that was much too uncompromising. Lady Whitehaven was true to type. She shook her head and laughed, as she rose and shook hands with me. 'Really, Lizzy, you are too hard on us. I'm telling her,' she said to me, 'that she ought to

come out of her tub. She's too nice to be Diogenes. Do persuade her—for I must fly. I'm sure I am late for a dozen things.' She kissed Lizzy on both cheeks, nodded happily to me and embarked for Cythera in her victoria.

I came back to Lizzy, who had not moved. 'No comfort there?' I asked. She stared with hard eyes at the carpet. Then she said, 'No, none. But she likes talking to me about her affairs. She has troubles of her own.' Then she stopped—to break out again in another place. 'She is one for men. Nothing else does her any good.'

I was rather shocked, though it was very true. 'You are very hard on her.'

'Oh,' said Lizzy, 'I don't mean anything bad. But I think she'd do wrong if there was no other way.'

'Kindness is really her fault,' I urged. 'She can't refuse the people who seek her. You don't believe that she is in love with Mainwaring?'

'No,' she said, 'I don't—nor he with her. That makes it worse, I think.' It certainly did.

Meantime Lady Whitehaven, really in love at last, and too deeply so to know how far she was sunk, had thoroughly alarmed Lord Gerald's mother, the Dowager. That keen-eyed old party immediately took steps to remove her darling from the lioness. A mission was arranging for Madrid to treat about some question of Tangier. That was her chance. Lord J—— was appointed

Envoy-Extraordinary, and we heard presently that Gerald Gorges was to go with him. It was a step towards eminence, and there was nothing to be said. Lady Whitehaven pressed the thorn into her bosom, and smiled at grief. Her bright eyes betrayed her; it was a humid glitter. I know that she saw him off at Victoria—and then took the Dowager home with her to lunch. Marvellous creatures, women are.

CHAPTER VII

THE FREE-LANCER

I AM not a politician myself, and have never been a member of Parliament, so that I feel quite incompetent to say how Mainwaring gradually edged himself into the position he occupied.

Bill Birks, M.P., a thoroughly good fellow, though rather comic in his admiration of himself, confessed that he didn't understand it. 'What the House wants from us chaps is the facts,' he said. 'It don't look to us for flowery speech. Now Mainwaring, without being flowery, is what I call a literary feller. His sentences have middles and endings. And they have sense in them, though he can wrap it up like Hardman. But he scolds the House—and they stand it. He plays the fool—and they laugh. He never laughs himself. And he is seldom too long. That's a great thing. You mustn't be long, and you must have something to say. Besides, they know, bless you, that he's got all Durham behind him. Look what he did at Culgaith. Look what he did with that crowd on the Embankment. The House knows that Mainwaring's a dangerous card. We aren't afraid of him—that's not our way. But we know he can do what he says.'

From the first, I understand, he sat aloof from either party, and from the first had very few political friends. He had enemies, of his own choice, in abundance. Mr Bentiyoglio was the first of them—the Hamburg rat, as he called him. Being an Irishman, you might have thought that he would incline to their party—but bless you, not he. ‘Dirty scoundrels,’ he called them, and didn’t care if they knew it. He was of Ulster, and was an Orange Protestant—when it suited him; yet he was not against Home Rule. ‘If they can get it they are worth it; leave it so’—was a saying of his. But Home Rule was a long way off in those days, and I am not sure, when it came to the point, whether he would have voted for it or not.

It was odd that a man who made his name by mob-leading outside should have made one in the House. He started with a strong prejudice against him—that’s certain. He was thought to be a quack—as he undoubtedly was. There were some who detected his method from the beginning: Lord Whitehaven was one. ‘Do you see how that chap does it?’ he asked me once, during a great campaign Mainwaring was making, entirely alone, in the Black Country. ‘I do. He doesn’t stop at preaching, or telling people how we tread on ’em. Not at all. He tells ’em what to do. “Come along,” he booms, “and pull their houses about their ears.” *That* they understand. Talk’s no good; it’s action they want. Well! off they

go together. Then at the last minute he switches 'em off like a pointsman, and takes 'em into a siding. "By George, that was a good one!" they say. And so say the beaks when some poor devil comes up next assizes for downing a policeman. "But for Mr Mainwaring's presence of mind a most dangerous state of things might have arisen . . ." Do you see? He gets it both ways, any time. Smart chap.'

It was so. It was very much Bill Birks's view of him. The public, it is said, loves to be deceived. No doubt it does, for it is always deceiving itself. After all, Mainwaring himself was only the public in an intensive form. If he hadn't taken himself seriously, swallowed himself whole, like a horse-ball, he would never have taken in his fellow-publicans. On the other hand, he was worth swallowing. There's no doubt about that. As he was fond of saying, He had a fire in his belly. There were times when he could have ignited the Thames; there were times when you may say that he did. Who will forget his Westminster Election, and his 'To H—ll with Privilege'? Nobody who heard him his artful peroration leading up to those savage words uttered with something between a snarl and a roar; nobody who saw his leanness, his height, his lionine head, his pallor, his jet-black mane and his burning eyes. Privilege is an old hack, as often *terrassée* as you please. She has weathered many Westminster Elections, from Charles Fox's onwards.

But it looked as if she was to have it in the neck that time. There was an ugly rush down Parliament Street after Mainwaring's speech in the Square, which I myself believe nothing could have stopped but just what did—Mainwaring himself, namely, at the precise moment of time when it could have been done. He turned them at the very gates of Palace Yard, standing up in the chair in which they carried him. He didn't take his hands out of his breeches pockets—how rarely he did!—but he jerked his head the way he wished to be carried, and his great forelock flew out like a flag. 'To the right, my lads, bear to the right!' And they did—God knows why. He told me afterwards that at that moment he hadn't a ghost of a notion where they were to go, or what he was to say when he was put down—somewhere. That was one of the many moments when he could have done what he liked—from commanding an army in the field to squaring the circle. Yet that night, as I happen to know, he had four-and-sixpence in his pocket, and was in debt £4,000. It was that particular feat which earned for Richard Denzil Blaise Mainwaring the interpretation of his initials which he loved, and wore like the rosette of the Legion of Honour: R.D.B.; Richard-Dannn-to-Blazes some wag called him, and it stuck. Mainwaring saw to that. Luckily too for him, his head of a black panther, his leanness and length were like grist for the caricaturists' mill. They turned out R.D.B.'s like sausages at

Chicago. At the Westminster Election walking-sticks were sold in hundreds, where his forelock was the handle. The forelock and the sunken eyes under great shaggs of brow were the features which hit the popular pencil.

But all this forensic frippery did nothing to advance him in the House, where, it was never disguised, the party-Whips were excessively bored with him. He could not be counted on, and, what was worse, he inspired Coward and the one or two others who were on the fringe of the opposition with the same independence. A very few more of them, and there would have been a Labour Party some thirty years before the time. As a matter of fact, it pretty soon came to be understood that nothing short of the last trump would call him into the same lobby with Benti-voglio. Therefore, if he voted at all, it would be with the opposition. That was something; but it was his oratory which nothing could curb. The Whips, I believe, like to have an idea who is going to speak, who will answer whom, and so on. But Mainwaring was incalculable, because speaking, with him, was a matter of emotion. When he was moved he was irrepressible, and simply magnificent. If he was speaking by arrangement, by design, by calculation or what-not, as like as not he made a mess of it. 'My dear man,' he told me once, 'when a thing fires me I am omniscient. The Universe unrolls itself; I see the stars in their courses. You may trust me when you hear

me then. I cannot be wrong.' It wasn't at all necessary to believe that; all that was wanted was that *he* should believe it—which he unfeignedly did. So, consequently, did many other people.

His scorn and abhorrence of Bentivoglio were undoubtedly a great gain to the opposition. Even old Hardman, who was of the old school himself, learned to count upon him. I suppose he disapproved of every second word Mainwaring uttered, but he could not fail to approve of its effect. He was occasionally very violent, he was often abominably rude; but however violent and however rude he was, there was a simplicity behind which appealed to the House's better part. Mainwaring was not unpopular with the House itself—on the contrary, he was not only always heard, but he was cheered on rising and cheered when he sat down. The word went about when he rose, and the House filled.

Some of his good things got about, and (as generally happens) some other people's good things accrued to him as he went on. I remember one which delighted everybody for a week. Criticising Sir Nicholas Usedom, who was then Attorney-General and remained, none the less, the solemn sepulchre he had always been, Mainwaring said that he had 'all the qualities of the kitchen poker without its occasional warmth.' Whether it was his own or not, doesn't matter. It was a delightful thing to have said. And he was very clever, too, in turning an offensive thing

into a ridiculous thing. 'The Right Honourable gentleman'—this was of Birkett, the lethargic Secretary of State, goaded at last into a Bill—'stimulated by the genial and unaccustomed warmth of his leader's praise, now skips here and there over the length and breadth of the Constitution like the fleas in his bed'—there was a roar at this outrageous sally, and Mainwaring made one of his most impressive pauses. 'I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker, for a breach of decorum. I should have said, and intended to say, like the fleas in *my* bed.' He enjoyed himself, and was allowed to.

He made very light of his triumphs, such as they were, and valued much more the adoration he received from his miners in Durham and dockers at the Tower. 'It's nothing at all, just nothing at all,' he told me. 'I'm feeling for my feet. When I've bottomed that pond I'll stir up something from the deeps. But give me time.' On another occasion he said, 'It's in me—it's not myself, but the demon inside of me. I can't stop it, and don't want. But let me tell you this: a man who can lead a horde of starving men and women can lead the House of Commons where he pleases. The force is the same, but it needs different application. The House is not a mob, because every man in it, by the fact of his being there, knows that he is somebody. My business is to convince such a man that I am two-bodies, his better self and my own self. Do that, and

you're made.' He seemed to have no doubt that that was a simple matter.

He was four or five years in the House before he took any definite line, except where Labour was concerned. There he was very wary about disclosing his hand. But when the General Election of 18— was held, and the Liberals came back triumphant, everyone believed that he would be found a place. He was not, however. He found one for himself. But I shall come to that.

He made more money as he went on, but he also spent more. Lizzy had given up the struggle in the only way really open to her. She refused absolutely to have any more from me, and would have repaid me what little I had lent her by a forced loan from her people if I would have had it. I satisfied my feelings by agreeing to Mainwaring's demands whenever I thought that he intended to pay bills with them. I told him so plainly, and he took it quite simply when once he understood that I meant what I said.

'My poor girl—yes, yes. I shall take it as a kindness to her. You may trust to my honour, my dear fellow.'

'Credit her integrity, Mainwaring,' I said. 'Remember what you took her from.'

'A mixen,' he cried, staring out.

'Not at all. You know that. You took her from a life where everything was paid for before it was used; and worked for before it could be paid for.'

'A life without a future—without a past. A life of animals. But I'll make it up to her.'

'You won't. She doesn't want what you want.' He knew it very well, but it angered him that I did too.

'A man must fulfil his destiny. No woman can stop him. I tell you I have these marionettes by the jig-strings. Have patience and you shall see them dance.'

'I am not your spiritual director,' I said. 'It is nothing to me whether you dance to Lady Whitehaven or she to you; but it is in my mind to tell you that I think your wife's standard a higher one than yours. She fulfils the law of her being; you wish to transcend yours. There are two ways of doing that, of which, it seems to me, you have chosen the wrong.'

He gloomed at me with reproachful eyes. 'You never believed in me—but you shall.'

'Oh,' I said, 'I think you might set the Thames on fire.'

'That will be something,' he said, very much gratified.

'It will be very little indeed compared to Lizzy's obedience.'

He stared at me open-mouthed, then turned away. 'The girl has bewitched you. Well, she bewitched me, in a bad hour. She's a beautiful woman.'

'She's prepared to live beautifully,' I said. 'I wish you'd help her.'

Here he began to jump about, his hands plunged deep. He jiggled from one foot to the other. 'I've got work to do—work to do. She must help.'

But in truth, by this time he despaired of her help. I think that he had done so from the beginning. Otherwise, how was it that he never let anyone know that he was married? Bill Birks didn't know it, Coward didn't know it; the Duchess didn't know it. Lady Whitehaven did. He told her everything. From his point of view it was the only thing to do, perhaps. Lizzy would not go into the high world; he refused to take her into any other. He was not here to make a Labour Party, though he intended Labourers to believe that he was. He was here to make himself a place. He told me that he intended to 'climb into Downing Street on the miners' backs.' He told no one else, I believe; but Lizzy knew it, had known it all along, and she thought it horrible. That was her reason—one of her reasons, anyhow—for washing her hands* of his affairs.

It was wonderful to me that she knew so much—for assuredly she did not have it from him. When I knew her so well that she could talk to me freely, without forethought or afterthought, she told me what I had half guessed already, that it was he who had inflamed the miners of Culgaith into striking when they did. True, they gained by it in the end; but you can see how the conviction of her husband's cheat must have taken

all the heart out of so simple and honest a creature as Lizzy. She saw, she endured herself, those weeks of suffering, knew that they were needless, knew that they were unjust. Even if they had been just, Mainwaring's hands were not clean.

It may have been that which turned his drudge into his judge. I am sure it was that which decided her to have no share in his climbing feats in West End mansions. She knew what he was there for. He climbed poles—for buns. She had all the worker's scorn for short-cuts.

CHAPTER VIII

MONTAGU SQUARE

I AM not very sure when the Mainwarings moved from Chelsea to Tyburn and entrenched themselves in a furnished house in Montagu Square, but believe it was shortly after that General Election I spoke of when the Liberals came in with a thumping majority and Mainwaring, if he had made a sign, could have got an Under-Secretaryship or a lordship of the Treasury. When I say that the Mainwarings moved, I mean, of course, that Mainwaring moved, and when I say that they entrenched, I mean that he did; for my poor Lizzy was incapable of it. You might as well have expected her to make an ingle-nook in the Crystal Palace. But Mainwaring was delighted with it, and spent other people's money like wine to keep himself aglow. It was vast, with much pale paint and gilding. I never saw a house look so uninhabited. The drawing-room was full of huge looking-glasses. It might do for a crowd; for one or two it was impossible. Lizzy vowed that it was haunted, and that she couldn't use it. It was, of course, haunted by her own sad face, which she saw from every angle

whithersoever she turned. It wanted two great fires all day—and didn't get them. So it had a mildewed look, and in the winter the frost settled into it like a blight. Then there was a great dining-room full of heavy mahogany and prints of one's grandfather's time: Wellington and Blucher meeting on the field of Waterloo; Coming of Age in the Olden Days; The Monarch of the Glen, and a still-life of sportsmen, stags, a boat, some Highlanders, dogs and dead fish. Mainwaring saw himself presiding at a political dinner—in fact, there was to be one. I was asked, and was coming. So was the Prime Minister, it seemed. There were to have been ladies, but I'm coming to them. Lizzy heard her husband tell me all this, or she may have heard. She looked a frozen woman—Lot's wife with the salt in her veins; Niobe feeling the grip of the stone. Afterwards he took me to his library, and showed me his books. A great many of them were real books—all, I think, to the eye-level; I saw *The Quarterly Review* and *Annual Register*. But above that they were shams and unabashed, without so much as titles printed on them, or Vol. I. and Vol. II. I found it all uncommonly bleak, and thought it a mistake—but he was as happy as a child over it. He kept me there for an hour or more while he talked, and I went away without a sight of Lizzy.

I called as soon as I decently could, and found her in the 'housekeeper's room,' so pointedly designated by the maid who opened the door.

'Madam is in the housekeeper's room,' she said—to mark her disapproval of such goings-on, I suppose.

I thought she was quite right, I must say. It was the smallest and dingiest room I had seen, but at least it looked like a human habitation. Lizzy's work-basket was open on the table. Her birds were in the window. There were her flowers, her portraits of her father and mother and married sister. And there, above all, was my rueful beauty in her black, pale as the moon in a cloudy sky. She blushed, smiled and rose. I took her hand for a moment.

'You shun your fine drawing-room?'

She laughed. 'Yes, it's much too fine for me. I feel like a shrimp in the Pacific. Besides, I'm the housekeeper now—and plenty to do, I can tell you.'

I didn't take in what she meant by that, and talked of something else. Presently I persuaded her to take a turn in the Park. She was delighted. 'Oh, I shall love it. You don't know how I long for the air. But when I've done my shopping in the morning there seems nowhere to go. I think I had rather stifle than go alone, unless I have something to do.'

'But why should you go alone?' She didn't allow herself to be serious.

'Oh, I can't pick up with anybody now, you see!'

That was the kind of thing she used to say which confounded my understanding and my utterance

at once. The humility of the thought and the memories it betrayed broke me down. Such a woman to 'pick up' with someone, or anyone! But they do it, you know. Beauty, nobility, have no prerogative. A woman is a woman, a perquisite of the hardy eye.

We went into the Park at the Marble Arch and walked down the Avenue. A balmy evening of late April, with the trees just breaking into golden leaf. We walked slowly and silently, as intimates may without discomfort. We had become intimate friends, on my own intense desire; on her side, she had slipped into intimacy unawares. Poor girl, she had no other friend except the servants in their new house. But those two were really her friends. She had known the cook before she married, she told me, and had made a friend of the other girl. She would have no disguises there.

But I think she trusted me altogether, and I know that I was more useful to her than her servants. I suppose, indeed, that she must have known what my feelings for her were. They say that women always do. Not a word had been said, of course—I had been much too careful to kindle dangerous fire in either of us. Yet, speaking for myself, a great peace possessed me at this time; and speaking for her, I believe she relied wholly upon me. We lived in the present, we lived from hour to hour; we deprived Mainwaring of nothing, and expected nothing of him but what

we had. It was a strange relationship, yet (speaking again for myself) it gave me sheer happiness. As my love had begun by respect, so I did not burn for the possession of her. If I had found myself in such a state of mind I believe I should have left her immediately.

Presently she took my arm, and I knew what that meant.

'Well——?' I said.

'I want to tell you something.'

'I know that you do.'

'I have made up my mind about Montagu Square. You see, I had to. He wants to have company there. He says that it is necessary now, and that he can afford it.'

'Can he, do you think?'

She sighed. 'Oh, I don't know. I'm sure he is deep in debt—but it is far beyond me now. Thousands, I dare say. People help him—the Duchess, he says, and I know that there are people in the city. He has a great scheme—he won't tell me what it is. But about his parties, he wanted me to receive the people and sit at the table.'

'Well, my dear, of course he did.'

'Oh, but——' She pressed closer—'I told him that I would never do it. It made him furious; and then I was angry too. He said that Lady Whitehaven would help me.'

'So she would, you know. You don't mind that? You know that you like her.'

'Yes, I like her. I'm sorry for her. But I won't do it.'

'What will you do, then? Hide in the house-keeper's room?'

'I said I would do whichever he liked—stay there or wait at table.' She felt me start; looked at me, and then became vehement. 'Nobody knows who I am, so why shouldn't I? I can do that well, and I should feel I was being useful. You wouldn't mind? You wouldn't stop me?' She was all alight with her idea.

I told her that I saw no harm in it. It might prevent Mainwaring having ladies to dinner, though I didn't see why it should. But, being what he was, he would most likely find it too much trouble. 'I see your point, of course,' I said, 'and only one practical difficulty occurs to me. If you are going to wait at the table, nothing will bring me to sit at it. He has asked me to the first of them, you know. To meet the Prime Minister.'

That troubled her. 'You wouldn't come?'

'No,' I said. 'I couldn't do it. I should be jumping up to help you all the time. As things are now I can't let you wait upon me.'

'Don't you see——?' She stopped there, with a sigh. Then she said it. 'Don't you see that I should love it?'

'My dear,' I said, 'I believe I do. Now I want you to see that I should hate it. I think it would be one of the most beautiful sights in the world --but it isn't one for me to see.'

She bent her head and was silent, thinking it all out. Then she said, 'Very well, I won't be there. I wish to please you, and want you to be there. So I promise.' She looked into my face, and what she said made my heart beat. 'But may I do it when you don't come?'

'Oh, Lizzy,' I said, 'how could I have the heart to stop you when you ask me like that?' She pressed my arm, and then took her hand away from it altogether. I had my own ideas about it all. Mainwaring would no doubt be gratified to have his wife waiting behind his chair, especially if Lady Whitehaven was beside him. That was just the sort of thing which ministered to his vanity.

The oddity was that, although I felt sure that she had better leave the man altogether than stay on as his servant, I couldn't tell her so. She wouldn't have heard me out. Nothing but violence on his part would have driven her out of his house. That was her instinct.

We talked presently of Mainwaring's prospects, which she thought poorly of. 'He has made a false step,' she said, 'and is going to waste himself. He is going to earn money, and is much better without it. Directly he loses his freedom he will lose his force. You'll see.'

I didn't think that he had ever pretended to be disinterested, and said so. 'He means to make a great position, and has never meant anything else.'

'Yes,' she said, 'and he has one. If he takes office he will lose it.'

'No; he's clever enough not to do that.'

She smiled sadly, but wisely. 'He isn't so clever as you think. I know him very well. He isn't clever enough to deny himself what he wants.'

'But, my dearest girl, what he wants is what he is aiming at. He may be mistaken; but if he gets what he wants, he succeeds, don't you see?' She wouldn't have it.

'No, no. He wants to be a great man, and he might be one if he would stand alone. If he takes office he won't stand alone. He'll be one of a crowd.'

'A very small crowd.'

'He'll be nothing,' she said; 'the least of them, and the worst—because he will have sold himself.'

I was struck silent by her clear vehemence, and she was silent too. But she was the one who broke it. 'When he was courting me he talked to me all day long, and I thought he would be a great man. He was all for the poor then. Now he is climbing on their backs.'

This could not be denied. On the way home she said a startling thing. Lady Whitehaven was mentioned, and Lizzy without passion revealed her mind. 'Lady Whitehaven! She has ruined him—and he will ruin her.'

'Don't say that,' I begged of her; 'and don't think it. I have you to think of in it all.'

'Oh, me !' she said. 'I don't count in it. He thinks he can do as he likes. He can't be denied. What he wants he must have. That is where the trouble is. She will have to deny him. The young lord will make her. There will be dreadful trouble.'

There was no answer to that, unless one was prepared with a remedy, which I wasn't.

I walked back with her to the house, as it was getting dusk, and found her husband there. As usual, he applauded me for taking Lizzy abroad. 'If it weren't for you,' he said, 'my poor girl would be a nun.' She had left me with him in his 'library,' so I took my chance.

'Better that she should be a nun, my dear man, than parlourmaid in her own house. That's what has been arranged, she tells me.' He would have blustered me down; but I stuck to my line. I will always say for him that he never shirked a difficulty.

'Begob,' he said, after a brisk interchange, 'you may be right. I never gave it a thought, to be plain with you. But we'll soon settle it.' He rang the bell, and was punctually answered. 'Ask Mrs Mainwaring to be so good as to step in here.'

She came and stood in the doorway, looking at us guardedly. I felt uncomfortable.

'Come here, my poor Lizzie,' he said, and she came slowly towards us. He put his arm round her waist and drew her nearer. 'My darling, our

friend here has been hammering into my skull that I shall be treating you ill at the dinner-party. I don't say he's right or wrong. I simply say, Leave it to her. Now, for the last time, will you sit at the foot of the table, my dear, or will you wait at it, as you thought at first? Don't hurry, my love. Let us know which it is to be. If you choose to be hostess, as you have every right to be, you shall have the best silk gown money can buy—and jewellery too, if you care for it. But I'm thinking that a neck like yours can do very well without it.'

She wasn't long over it. She neither met my eyes, nor sought his. 'I *have* chosen already. I shall wait at table—but not next month.'

Mainwaring turned triumphant to me. 'You see. She knows what to do.'

I bowed. 'I have nothing to say against her choice. It is obvious that she knows what to do. I can only regret that you don't.'

He tossed his great head up. 'You little know me ~~if~~ you think I should dare interfere with a lady's inclinations!'

I didn't ask him why he had a dinner-party at all, if he could only have it at the cost of his wife's humiliation.

'I'm sorry that I said anything. But Lizzy knows how I feel about such things.' Then she looked at me, with wide-open eyes, as if asking for charity.

'Yes, I know how you feel. It was kind of you,

but, believe me, I can't do anything else.' Then she left us.

Mainwaring plunged his hands. 'They are queer! It's well for me we have no Woman's Suffrage. You can lead men like sheep—but you must be a woman to know women. My friend, little as I know of them, I know more than you do.'

'I am studying men at present,' I said shortly. 'I've not got to the bottom yet.'

He didn't take the trouble to answer me. He just nodded me away without ceremony, and turned to his letters. I left him and went out into the hall unaccompanied. At the foot of the stairs was Lizzy.

Her colour was high. 'You aren't angry with me? You know that really you agree.'

'Yes, my dear, I agree with you—but not with him. If you won't appear at his dinner-parties except behind his chair, he ought not to give dinner-parties here at all. That's the real way out.'

She dropped her eyes and shivered ever so slightly. 'All men aren't like you,' she said.

'All men don't know you,' I answered. 'I'm angry with Mainwaring.'

'Don't give him up,' she said.

'I'll never give *you* up, anyhow.'

She looked at me—her eyes, clear gray-green, were full of faith.

'Don't talk about it. Let us be as happy as we can.'

'As we dare,' I said. She shut her eyes and shivered again.

'Don't talk about it. I can't. Good-bye.'

I didn't dare take her hand, anyhow, not knowing what I might not have done with it. So I left her.

CHAPTER IX

AFTER DINNER

THE dinner-party was as solemn and stupid as such things must be where the guests know that they are conferring a favour and the host, knowing it too, resents it. It lacked spontaneity and cordiality; it was ill-balanced, and I should say did Mainwaring more harm than what he was pleased to consider good. Mainwaring's success lay in defying the lightning, or perhaps in making a rival storm of his own—it comes to the same thing. He was entirely without the social gift; his gaiety was hollow, and chiefly mockery; he was anxious to disturb, not to please. He needed fiercely the sympathy of women, but could only get it by frightening them. I know Lady Whitehaven was afraid of him; I think he scared even the effrontery of the Duchess. The only woman whom he could not move either to admiration, hope, or love, and who was never frightened of him was his peasant-born Lizzy.

It was because he wanted Lady Whitehaven there, and because she wouldn't come alone, that he had ladies there at all. He only had three to his eight men; but three was a crowd if he had

the lady of his desire. The Duchess came—‘for fun,’ as she said (and I hope she got it); Mrs Hardman accompanied the Prime Minister; and then there was Lady Whitehaven. She was practically hostess, though her sister took the edge off that anomaly. I forget what we had to eat; but Vipond saw to all that, and Vipond had a name to keep. How Mainwaring paid for it, or if he ever did, I didn’t inquire. All I know about that is that when he left the house in the manner which I have to relate, it was I who tipped the major-domo and the *chef*.

It is hard to say offhand if such absurd shows as this ever profit a man on the make. It is so easy to confuse spending money with progress, and a common fallacy that the more you spend the more you make. Consider this party for a moment: Hardman must have known that he was condescending, the Duchess must have known that she was playing; and you would have said that Lady Whitehaven must have known that she was playing with fire. If she didn’t, by Jove, she found out. I never saw a man so publicly and avowedly in possession of another man’s wife before. She could not, of course, sit by him, though he was awfully sulky about it and scowled at her down the table whenever he had time to remember his grief. There are some conventions too strong even for Mainwaring’s will. But that made her seem still more the *Hausfrau*, and

secretly I'll swear he was pleased. In every other respect he treated her like wife or mistress, ordered her about, signed to her what she was to do, kept her Greuze eyes upon him perpetually in appeal or inquiry; and afterwards, when the men went upstairs, took her into a corner and hectorred her in vehement whispers, like a lover, leaving all the rest to shift for themselves. That, thanks to the Duchess, they immediately did. She was a favourite with the P.M.—and, after all, she was a duchess, and a fashionable duchess. She made no secret—why should she? 'Oh, those two are hopeless!' she said to Hardman, brought Verschoyle up with a lift of the eyebrow to take charge of Mrs Hardman, then turned to the P.M. and kept him amused. As for the ruck, they went hang; and as for me, I went to see Lizzy in the house-keeper's room.

She looked at me in a guarded, serious, careful way, only a flicker of a smile upon her lips, her beautiful eyes in cloud. I knew that she was expecting me, that my presence could comfort her, that for a time at least she could forget that she was a stranger, and a sojourner in a strange land. She had a book open on her lap; I don't think she had been reading it. She liked me to read to her, but was not naturally a reader. She was her mother's child, inspired, as she was built, for maternity, the care of a house, the comfort and solace of a man. She should have been the

light of a man's days, the joy and peace of his nights. Here she was nothing, and knew it. It was much to her that I loved her—and all the world to me.

Lizzy was a woman with whom one could remain silent without *gêne*, imbibing her benignant femininity through the pores, as it were. She radiated peace, she was as comfortable, and beautiful too, as a wood fire. After I had sketched with a light hand the order of events upstairs, we sat quietly together without talk, except now and again for a murmur which might utter a passing thought. I believe that I comforted her; I know that she enriched me. To love her, as some one said of some one else, was a liberal education. One could at least correct one's standard of values.

A light finger at the door announced Lady Whitehaven, whose rosy face and laughing, kind eyes peeped in upon us before the rest of her shimmering person. I had been expecting her for some time, knowing that her kindness of heart would insist upon her effort to show Lizzy that everything was for the best. 'May I come for a peep at you? How snug you are here. You shy bird, you should have plucked up your courage. The grandees behaved like lambs, and it was all delightful but for your being away. The table—lovely. Your doing, of course. And your man behaved beautifully—for him, you know.'

That was too optimistic for me, sore with Mainwaring as I was. 'Oh, come,' I said, 'really, as a

man of integrity, I can't pass that. Didn't you hear Mrs Hardman? "My husband is speaking, Mr Mainwaring," she said.'

She laughed with confusion—quite pretty. She leaned forward, half-shut her eyes, nodded and whispered the words, 'Yes, I did. Wasn't it awful?'

'It might have been, if Mainwaring hadn't been so taken aback that he was robbed of speech. He opened his mouth to roar—but the vocal chords were appalled. No sound came.'

'It was too bad of the P.M.; but of course one knows him. Who wanted to know about the Amalekites,' this was to Lizzy, 'when your man was going to tell us about the boiler-makers' strike? He told me all about it afterwards. Will he go up there and help them, Lizzy?'

Lizzy said that they had asked him. 'I had much rather we went up there than stayed here,' she said. 'We shall do no good here to anybody.'

There was no bitterness in her tone, but we both knew that she meant it. I think, too, that each one of us knew why Mainwaring would not go up to Jarrow. Lady Whitehaven grew serious at once. 'You really think that? But, you see, for his career he must be in touch with all the great people. And he does love it so, and he is so comic about it.'

That was an error of judgment; and it didn't carry the thing on. Perhaps Lizzy had no sense of humour, and in such a case she might be

excused, I think. I thought I might speak for her, so represented that he ~~might~~ be very comic to Lady Whitehaven and yet not advance his affairs. 'The P.M.,' I said, 'won't put him into anything for his dinners, but because he can't help himself. Mainwaring has only to be nuisance enough with his boiler-makers or cotton-spinners, and he'll get all he wants. Do tell him that if he neglects his trade unions he's done for.'

Lizzy spoke now, quietly, but as clearly as if she saw them. 'They believe in him. They stand in the lanes talking about him. The women write to him about their troubles.'

Lady Whitehaven looked unhappy, and no doubt was so, for she had a good heart.

'Oh, I am sure he will never betray them—and so are you, Lizzy. Tell me that you are. But you must give him time. You know that he has a great *coup* in his hands?'

We didn't, and she evidently did. That confused her. 'He happened to ask me what I thought. It just bubbled out of him. He knew that I knew all the people, you see. No, I won't tell you a word about it. You'll have it all from him so much better than I could tell you. It will be very exciting.' After that she devoted herself to charming Lizzy out of her solemnity, talking mostly about her children. The girl, Lady Mary, was to be presented this year, it seemed—and one was to be confirmed at school. She was perfectly natural, and did it very well. Lizzy could always

talk about children, and presently contributed shy anecdotes of her brothers and sisters as comparisons and illustrations. The lady played up, and we had a happy conversation, in which my part was to be touched almost to tears. It interested me vastly to watch those two—and see the high lady courting the peasant woman.

I don't know how long it may have lasted; but it had a shocking interruption. Mainwaring came in upon us. He had been drinking and looked very wild. He took no notice whatever of Lizzy or me, but bent his ragged brows upon the poor lady whose efforts to avoid the appearance of strain were pathetic in their gallantry. They were rather like sheltering from a thunderstorm under a Japanese parasol.

'They have all gone. Your sister asked for you. I lied about you, said you had gone on somewhere.'

'Oh, I know. I ought to have been in half-a-dozen places. But Lizzy——'

'I wished for you. You ought not to have left me.'

'Really, Mainwaring——' I began, but he took no more notice of me than if I had been the wind in the chimney.

'For what it is worth you have had my devotion. You know what my feeling is. What, good heavens, are these people to me unless you are there to give them any significance? You are

like the sun which gives life to dead earth. You are the moon above black waters, gilding them to——' He had not the slightest suspicion that he was talking rank melodrama—and I won't believe that Lady Whitehaven had either.

She had risen now, poor woman, not able to pretend any longer. She had a keen sense of fun, but I doubt if she saw how comic this might be. You need to be spectator, not actor, if you are to be diverted.

'You mustn't be so complimentary, you know. It is very bad for me. And really I must fly——' He grew hot and very wild.

'I see that I weary you. I am to be thrown over—idle lumber. But you may play me once too often. We must understand each other, Rose.' I don't think either of us knew that he called her Rose. Rose herself was horribly frightened. She had turned to Lizzy, who, with no art at her command, could not hide her discomfort. She submitted, however, to the kindly hands, even to the kiss of her unfortunate guest.

'Good-bye, my dear. It has been delightful to have this little chat. I must really go.' She nodded to me and turned to the door. Mainwaring stalked after her and we saw no more of him. Whether they left together, or whether he pursued her in a cab I never knew.

Lizzy sat down again. I stood near her for a little. There was nothing to be said unless I said all—and that I dared not do. At the same time

I felt that it was necessary to cool down the temperature.

'He's boring her to death; I'm very sorry for her,' I said.

Lizzy could not answer. She never had any of the small change of talk.

I said again, 'She won't stand much more of it. She'll get rid of him altogether.'

Then she said, 'She won't be able to. He is treating her now as he treated me at first.'

'My dear,' I said to her, 'does it hurt you? Do you love him?'

She shook her head. 'No, no. You know I don't. But it is insulting—I am offended. I am his wife—and——' She could not go on.

'Lizzy, I ought to go. But I can't bear to leave you.' That was forced out of me. She showed me her clear, true eyes.

'Yes, go now. Don't be worried about me. This is only a little worse than it has been for a long time. I know that things like it go on every day—but I haven't been there. Do go now.'

'What shall you do when I have gone?'

'I shall go to bed. What else could I do?'

'Lizzy, may I say something?'

She looked scared. 'No, nothing, nothing. Please don't. I mustn't listen. Besides——'

'What?'

'——I know it. Now go.' She gave me her hand; I kissed it, and went upstairs. There I

found Vipond's myrmidons in shirt-sleeves dismantling the rooms. They had to be appeased. They inquired of me rather anxiously for Mainwaring. I saw them off the place before I left it—left it bare and echoing, with the most beautiful woman in England of less consideration in it than a toothless old caretaker with an untied bonnet on her dusty hair. There was nothing to be done.

CHAPTER X

LADY WHITEHAVEN IN WOE

I WAS in the most painful position in which lover could be. The woman I loved I dared not comfort, the woman I honoured I must see dishonoured. I had no *locus standi* with her husband, none which I could claim with her. All the day following I felt her dear hands pulling at my heartstrings; yet I might not venture to present myself in Montagu Square. There must be no flaw upon her quiet perfection, and I felt that it would be a flaw if the maid at the door put me down as her mistress's lover. No doubt I was a fool, because, according to my own standard of conduct, you were what you intended to be, and not what you appeared to the world. But Lizzy did not see things like that. In her mind conduct must be as scrupulous as the thought which moved it. She would neither do wrong, nor seem to do it—and, she would say, the maid at the door was her equal in the world. That was how she treated her, as I knew who had seen them together. The servants in the house knew all about her, from her own lips, and were entirely on her side. It was rather extraordinary, I thought, how exactly Lizzy kept the balance between mistress-ship of the house

and companionship with her maids. When Mainwaring was away, I know (for she told me) that she lived in the kitchen and had her meals in the servants' hall. She took her share of the housework too. She said that it kept her healthy and made her happier, and I have no doubt of it at all. At the same time, so far as I could judge, she suffered no encroachments. It wasn't to be supposed, for instance, that she would allow any discussion of Mainwaring. That would have been quite against Lizzy's ideas, just as it would have been to pretend herself other than she was. Strange, contrary, yet logical creature! So open about herself, so close about her husband!

All that added to my perplexities, for it prevented my seeing her or writing to her. And quite as well, very likely, that it did. By this time I didn't pretend to myself that I wasn't in love with her, nor that (if such a thing could happen) I shouldn't be only too happy that she should have left Mainwaring altogether. I didn't work it out in any detail, or I should have seen at once that that would only have added to our discomfort. She wouldn't have come to me because she had left him, bless you! She would have gone home and kept herself by her work of hands and knees. I should have been allowed to see her and ache for her. Fine work indeed. No, I see it now. So long as he didn't ill-treat her she was better where she was. And somehow I never thought that he would do that. Nor did he ever.

I passed a pretty bad week of it, though, and so, I imagine, did another fly in Mainwaring's web—I mean her ladyship. Towards the end of it I had a telegram signed, *Rose Whitehaven*, which said, *Do dine here to-night quietly*, which I supposed to imply a desire to pump me of my judgment of what had happened in Montagu Square. I said that I would go—and I went.

The house in Cavendish Square was vast, with a faded, handsome, French look. Great hall, with marble pavement and statues, broad stone stair, white-and-gold door, and a huge drawing-room with an Aubusson carpet, silk hangings, gold chairs and all the rest of it. Lady Whitehaven, beautifully dressed, was with her pretty, delicate Lady Mary. They looked like sisters. A son, Charles, either just leaving Eton or just gone to Oxford, slim, sleek, and good-looking, like all her children; a young man in the navy, called Vyse, and by them Dolly; a Miss Jeans or Jaynes, fat, in eyeglasses, a retainer: that was all. Obviously I was to be pumped after dinner.

She made it go, of course. She was perfectly delightful, and brought me into the family in the natural, easy way her class has, and her class only. It was done entirely without effort, with complete success. The only thing obvious about it was the kind of appeal which her eyes now and then made to me to play up to her. I could see, in fact, what she asked of me: You know that I am consumed by misery; you know what my life

has become; you know how my heart is torn to pieces—well, won't you help? There must be pretence in a life like mine. Good heavens, here are these beloved creatures growing up! You don't mean me to betray them, do you? And yet I, their adored mother, am in love with one man and persecuted by another, and simply don't know which way to turn for ease. You are here to help me, don't you see? Keep it up, then.

Well, I kept it up. It wasn't at all difficult, with such a lead as hers. Young Vyse was from the Ægean, which I knew well; the boy Charles was going up to Oxford in October; Lady Mary said that she liked my poems, and Miss Jaynes, I believe, really did like them. We did very well indeed.

It was Lady Mary who brought up Mainwaring. 'The Fenian' they called him in that family. The young woman evidently thought him a hit. She knew he had been in prison, and might go there again. I admitted it, and told her that I thought he liked it. She considered the answer and me together, and then said, 'I don't think you really believe that. I think you really mean that you don't like *him*.' The whole table waited for me. I said, 'No, you are wrong. I ought not to like him, but I really do.' And that was absolute truth on my part.

Lady Whitehaven smiled—a faint, rather wan smile. 'You think him too disorganised, too *décousu*.'

I didn't see why I should make any bones about what I really thought, so I said, 'No. If anything, he is rather too well organised. He has a system, and sticks to it. He is playing rather a deep game.'

She would have led me on from that, but her daughter broke in. She flushed up, and said defiantly, 'I think he's splendid.' Charles and Vyse both exclaimed at that. Vyse unguardedly called him an outsider—but Charles said quietly, 'The worst of him is that he's not.'

'No,' I said, 'you are right. He pretends to be, when he thinks it necessary—but he isn't one at all, really. Nobody knows better than Mainwaring what he can do, and what he ought not.'

Vyse caught me there. 'You say "what he ought not"—not "what he can't."'

'No,' I admitted, 'I don't think he knows what he can't do. I don't suppose he thinks there is anything that he can't do—if he wants to do it.'

Lady Whitehaven was crumbling her bread. I saw how quickly she was breathing. Heaven help her, it was a kind of death-warrant—and yet she loved to believe it. Young Lady Mary, high-coloured and bright-eyed, cheered the utterance.

'Yes, I know, I know. That's why I think he's splendid. You might as well call Napoleon an outsider,' she said to poor Vyse.

'Well,' said Vyse, 'I expect he was.' She lifted high her brows. What was to be said to such an opinion? The talk drifted from Mainwaring.

After dinner I perceived that I was in for a *tête-à-tête*; for the young people went away about ten o'clock to a party somewhere, and left me at her ladyship's discretion. It was all done very simply and without fuss. She slid into what she wanted to be at by saying, with gentle, sub-malicious humour—'You and Lizzy Mainwaring seemed so domestic the other night, I was quite ashamed to disturb you.'

I thought I had better meet her quite half-way. 'The domesticity was on the surface, Lady Whitehaven. It isn't easy to be domestic in another man's house—and Lizzy wouldn't allow it.'

She took me at once. 'No, indeed. She is a dear creature, but I am sure she is a dragon.'

'She has her ideas,' I said; 'and one of them is that, anyhow, she belongs to Mainwaring. Handed over by her father, at the bidding of a clergyman.'

She bent her fair head. 'Yes, I know. And you would add to that—or you might—that Mainwaring in the same way belongs to her. It is all very complicated——'

'If there are complications,' I said, 'they are not of her addition. She is not so simple as you think. She knows that Mainwaring considers himself a free-lance—or, rather, he is one without considering the matter at all. I say, she knows that is Mainwaring's view of himself; but it is not her view of Mainwaring.'

Lady Whitehaven's eyes were soft and dewy. I saw them to be so as she regarded me.

'Does Lizzy love her husband, do you think?' She asked me that.

I knew—or thought I did—that she did not, but did not see my way to saying so. So I answered that I thought we were bound to assume it. 'Her conduct, at any rate, does not contradict that assumption.' I did not say that; it was not necessary—but it was latent enough in what I did say to make the lady hang her head. A pause followed, in which I could see that she was about to bare her bosom to anything I chose to throw at it. And so the poor lady did.

'As a friend of Lizzy's I fear you must think me very wrong; yet I hope you will do your best to believe that I am sincerely her friend too. I find it very difficult—almost impossible, to talk freely to her. We move in such different worlds—she might find it impossible even to begin to understand—to make, shall I say? allowances——' I broke in there.

'I think I may say on Mrs Mainwaring's account—it may save you needless distress—that she perfectly well understands the value of your kindness to Mainwaring. But she was, I think, unprepared for it. When Mainwaring became interested in her, you see, there was no prospect—at any rate open to her—that he would ever be swimming in a stream where you were afloat.' Lady Whitehaven opened her blue eyes wide.

'Oh, but really—— Lizzy must have seen that he was——'

'Of course she did. She didn't want to marry him at all. But as he insisted——'

She narrowed her eyes and nodded once or twice. 'I know—I know—poor dear.' And then she gave me a full look. 'I had not the slightest idea that he was married until long after I had known him.' I laughed.

'I don't suppose it occurred to him to tell you. He only told me as an afterthought—in Venice.'

'It was in Venice that he told me about it,' said Lady Whitehaven. 'I had seen a great deal of him all the winter before we went there. Of course, it surprised me very much; and when I came to know Lizzy—as I insisted on doing—I confess that I began to feel very uncomfortable.' She played with a tassel on her sash—then broke out again. 'It is most uncomfortable—but it is impossible. He is really—at times, you know—— That party of his, for instance——' Then she showed an imploring look. 'Can you help me, do you think?'

Really, I didn't see how I could. It was obvious that the poor lady was more than bored. She was frightened—stiff, as we say now. And I don't wonder at it. The man would stick at nothing.

I told her that I had no authority with Mainwaring at all, except in so far as I was useful to him. He knew that I was fond of his wife, and that she considered me a good friend. He didn't

at all mind that—in fact, it was useful to him, a sort of sop to his conscience. But the moment he thought me in his way he would cut me out of his house and conversation. Our acquaintance was no more than that, had neither a moral nor a sentimental basis. The notion that I could stand between him and his aims could not even be put before him. All that she saw, and sighed over it.

‘I suppose I shall have to go abroad,’ she said. ‘It is a horrid bore, with Molly in her first season. In fact, I don’t know that I really can. My husband, of course, *never* interferes, otherwise——’

At that moment a smashing double knock at the door made itself felt in the great room where we sat. Lady Whitehaven put her hand to her side and went quite white.

‘A telegram——’ I suggested; but she shook a sick head.

‘No, no—it’s——’ Then she gasped and held out her hand towards me. ‘Don’t go—oh, don’t leave me—I know what it is——’ So did I, now.

‘Go and catch the man before he answers the door—go quickly. Let him say I am out. Go.’

I bolted downstairs, and just caught the porter putting on his coat.

‘Her ladyship is not at home to anybody, she says.’

‘Very good, sir.’ I waited, so did he. The knocker shattered against the door again.

‘Better say she is out,’ I said.

‘Very good, sir.’

As I went upstairs I heard Mainwaring ask for her, heard the reply, and him say, ‘Nonsense. Her ladyship will see me.’ The man again said something—lied again, I suppose. Mainwaring said, ‘Then I’ll wait.’ At that moment I went into the drawing-room, and saw her crouched against the mantelpiece. She gave me a hunted look.

‘He has been denied,’ I said, ‘but I am afraid he means to wait.’

Dignity came back to her. ‘Then I shall go to bed. I am so sorry you have been disturbed by this mediæval scene.’ She rang the bell, and we both waited until the footman came in. ‘Tell Chambers I am going upstairs, please.’ He bowed himself away. She held out her hand. ‘You have been more than kind. Tell Lizzy that I am coming to see her. Go there to-morrow, if you can. I am sure you will deal with him for me if you find him downstairs.’ I opened the door for her and saw her upstairs. Then I went down. Mainwaring was not in the hall, or apparently in the house. The porter let me out, and there, sure enough, on the pavement, I saw him—looking gigantic in the misty lamplight. He was in black, with his overcoat collar up to his ears; a crush hat on the back of his head. He didn’t see me until I spoke to him—then he jumped like a stung horse.

‘Hulloa, Mainwaring,’ I said, ‘what on earth

are you doing here? Is your wife at a party—or anybody's wife?'

He was really disconcerted this time. 'No, no—nothing of that sort. I have been dining out, and walked home with a man here.' He recovered himself, and his suspicions awoke. 'And you—where have you been?'

'I have been dining with the Whitehavens, *your* friends.' I saw him staring, and if it had been light enough could have seen down his throat. 'Her ladyship has gone to bed with a headache. Some brute with a telegram came clamouring at the door, and probably woke her up. Whitehaven wanted to shoot him.'

That was a risky one of mine. I wondered if Mainwaring knew that Lord Whitehaven was in Paris. Apparently he did not.

'Those chaps think themselves messengers of the gods,' he said. 'As indeed they are.' He stood where he was, and I with him, for a time: then he seemed to give in all at once, as if he believed me. I saw him look up at the second floor of the Whitehaven palace. Perhaps he saw a light in her room.

'Well,' he said, 'I believe I'll go to bed. I have talked too much and drunk too much for comfort—and I go to Jarrow to-morrow.' We turned to leave the Square.

'Strike-meeting?' I asked him. 'Or strike-breaking?'

'I shall be able to tell you when I get there,'

he told me. 'But, by God, if I'm not very much out, I'll break more than a strike this time.'

He wouldn't say any more, but hailed the first cab we saw, and got in. I heard him give Montagu Square before I left the pavement. 'Tell Lizzy that I shall call to-morrow morning,' I said. He waved his hand.

CHAPTER XI

LIZZY IN PRINT

HAVING doubly plugged my conscience, first by Lady Whitehaven's bidding, next by due notice to Mainwaring, I went off at half-past ten in the morning to see Lizzy. What should be done with her when I saw her I left to Providence, which (in a particular department) is supposed to laugh at locksmiths. I wanted to see her so much that the mere realisation that in twenty, in fifteen, in ten minutes I really should make my heart beat like a mill-wheel. I rode on the top of an omnibus; the sun was shining on old house-fronts and shining pavements. It seemed to me that every other woman I saw was a beauty—and then I remembered Lizzy, and laughed at such optimism.

For all that and all that, I didn't know what earthly advice to give her. The substantial thing to remember was that the man did not ill-treat her. It was not ill-treatment of her that he was making a fool of himself and of another woman, if Lizzy didn't mind. And if she didn't love him, I couldn't believe that she did mind. I was certain that she had not a pennyweight of vanity

in her beautiful mind. There was no *spretæ injuria formæ* to be feared, legitimate as such a grief would be in any woman. But Lizzy had not married Mainwaring for love, and had been bored rather than flattered by the whole affair. The one thing she had taken dreadfully to heart was the death of her baby, and the one thing that kept her with Mainwaring now, I don't doubt, was the chance of getting another. I knew absolutely nothing about that sort of thing—but now that I can afford to think it over, I am sure that in my inmost mind I didn't believe that he lived with her. In that I may have been wrong—but that was at the back of my mind in those days. And I'll say another thing in my own justification. If I ever thought of Lizzy—then—as Mainwaring's wife, and of what that involved, it gave me no distress. That she should yield herself to a man who loved another woman at least as much as he loved her (probably a great deal more), yield herself, because she had contracted to do so, seemed to me a beautiful act of humility, a condescension which could only be paralleled by the divine and tragic act of condescension—the supreme sacrifice. The unco pious may be scandalised—but wrongly. One can but sacrifice the utmost one has—and what has a woman to offer but her heart in her body, or (if you like) her body in her heart? And if she sacrifice body without heart, the greater may be the oblation. But all this is by the way.

She opened the door to me herself—there, glowing, she stood, in apron and print gown, a white cap, like a crescent moon, in her hair. She looked so beautiful, blushing and confused as she was, that I nearly lost my senses. ‘Oh, Lizzy, to meet you like this, in your own house!’ I didn’t know what I was saying.

She laughed—that is, her eyes laughed. ‘You ought not to mind. It will be the first time you have seen me happy in it.’ It was obviously true that she was happy.

‘If it is your happiness that makes you look like a rose, I am ready to give thanks for it, however you got it.’ I don’t think that I had ever told her before that she was beautiful. I was rather shocked with myself directly I had said it—but she took it quite calmly.

We went into her sitting-room below-stairs—the housekeeper’s room—and she told me all about it. It had really been settled on the day of the dinner-party, and was begun the day after it. Mainwaring had made no objection whatever. The other women in the house were friends of Lizzy’s—the cook, indeed, had been cook in the house from which she had been taken to be married. Lizzy had been housemaid there. Now—in her husband’s house, she was parlourmaid, and a friend of hers, Elsie by name, was housemaid. There had been no trouble at all, she said, and she was ‘another girl’ since she had done it. It was a strange thing to me—but it ought not to have

been. What happened when Mainwaring was at home without company? Did she have breakfast with him? She shook her head. 'No, I have all my meals with the others. They would be hurt if I didn't—and I prefer it myself.'

'Then he never sees you at all, except as a maid!'

She did not flinch. 'He can when he wants to, of course.'

'I meant that there must be lots of things to consult you about. His plans, for instance, his work, his letters—you can't be dropped out of his daily concerns—even if you both wished it.'

That also she took very simply. 'Oh, no. He shows me any letters he chooses—and sometimes asks me what I think. Then I tell him. Sometimes he tells me what he has said or done in the House—or where he has dined—or whom he has met. I know that he met you last night, for instance. He told me that.'

'Did he tell you where he had met me?'

She raised her eyebrows. 'No. I guessed that.'

Then I told her from point to point everything that had happened overnight. She heard me out without a sign. It was evident that her native fatalism was helping her. If not that, then it must be that she did not care. When I had done, as she said nothing, but sat with her cheek in her hand, fixedly looking at her lap, I began again.

'Lizzy, it is plain to me that Lady Whitehaven

is miserable about all this, and won't be able to stand a renewal of the scene in this room. It is true that she brought it all on herself. One doesn't need to tell her that. She knows it. All she has to say is, as I told you, that when she encouraged Mainwaring she didn't know that he was married. When she knew that it was too late. Now, I don't see why you should go out of your way to get her out of her trouble, except for one reason—that it would perhaps get you out of trouble too. If I may say so, I can't bear to think that I may see you insulted again as you were that night.'

She looked up at me—quickly, and then looked to her lap again. 'I don't think he knew he was insulting me.'

'No, indeed,' I broke out, 'I don't suppose it entered his head.'

'I was much more sorry for her than I was for myself,' she went on. 'You see, I know him, and she doesn't. I know that in many things he is a child. He sees a thing, and he wants it. If he can't get it he makes a fuss. I have thought sometimes of leaving him for a time,' she went on, clasping her hands round her knees. 'I think it very likely he would come for me by-and-by; and if he did I could make some sort of terms for myself. But if he didn't I know that he would destroy himself and her too. So I don't think about it. I know that he won't destroy me—and now that I have settled my place here I am as

happy as I can expect to be. It is money that worries me. You know what I think about that. I belong to people who have never been in debt—and now we are deep in debt. I don't know what he owes—but it is so much that I am sure the tradesmen won't supply us much longer. He takes money from his great friends—and I can't tell you how I hate it. But I have nothing to do with it. He pays me like a servant, and pays the other girls here—and I don't know, any more than you do, where he gets the money from. He is on a wrong road—he is not doing what he promised to do—he has deceived me about that. Oh,' she cried out sharply, as if she was hurt, 'I hate it, I hate it. I was brought up so good, and now I am a liar. That is much worse than the other thing. It is nothing to me what he does with other women. I am ready to do my duty—as a wife or a mother, if I get a chance. The rest of it seems to me to be his own business, not mine. He took me because he talked my mother over—I knew he was a gentleman—but he told me he couldn't live without me—and that he had given up his life to helping working-people. The least I could do, he said, was to stand in with him. Well, and I did—and now he is going back to his own set, and all I am allowed to do for him is to be his parlourmaid. If he had lived as he was when I first knew him—on thirty shillings a week—I would have worked myself to the bone for him and my baby. But baby died because I

couldn't keep him alive—and I shan't have another. I sometimes wish I had died too——' She hid her face in her hands, and sobbed once or twice. 'My dear, my dear,' was all I could say. I dared not touch her.

Presently she wiped her eyes, and smiled faintly. 'I know you don't think me silly. It does me good to tell you my troubles, and to cry about them. Do you know I have never told anybody but you anything about it? And I began to tell you, I don't know how long ago.' She gave me her hand, and I kissed it. I was too much moved to speak.

'Lizzy,' I said presently, 'you are a noble girl. I shan't say that there's no one like you, because I believe that there are a thousand women like you. I would like to believe that there were three men in this town so clear-headed and honourable. But that isn't the way of men, and perhaps not what they are here for. Anyhow, you have convinced me that you are right to stay here, and right to act as you do—until, Lizzy, until, my dear, you can act better.'

She asked me what I meant. I told her. I said that however it was that Mainwaring fell in love with her—which I didn't wonder at at all—it was plain that love could never hinder his destiny. It was his destiny to rise, and to rise in politics. All his ability, passion, wit, reading, powers of mind would be bent by his nature to the fulfilling of that destiny. Might it not be

her business to keep pace with him, or to try to keep pace? 'Instead of giving it all up, my dear, and contenting yourself with doing his housework, couldn't you sit at his table, receive his guests, and mix with his world? You are shy about beginning—but if you want to keep him, I'm not sure that there is any other way of doing it.'

I had seen signs of storm in the concentration of her pupils, in her lips pressed together, and rising colour—but I finished what I had to say; and then I added, 'Don't do it to please me, you know. I prefer you infinitely as you are—but I think that he might like you better if you went into the world with him.' Then she lifted her head, and I saw her eyes grown cold and hard, like winter stars.

'I will never go into that world. It is hateful to me. I think it horrible. I would rather be on the streets than like Lady Whitehaven. I'll die if I can't be honest.' Her arms moved, as if she would hold them out to me—her lips trembled—her eyes filled. 'Don't—oh, don't ask me to do it. Indeed I couldn't.'

I shook my head. 'Never more, my dear. I was wrong. Be yourself.—I ask nothing better in the world than you as you are.'

She thanked me, and wiped her tears away. I felt a brute, though in all I said I had been working against myself.

After that I took a lighter tone altogether, and got her at her ease. How far, for instance, did

she think herself in service? Oh, she said, all the way in. What, did she have an afternoon off? She nodded, smiling. Well, then; would she allow me to walk out with her? Smiling and blushing, yes, indeed, she would. When was it? It was to-morrow. All right. I would be in the Square at three o'clock, and we would go to Kew Gardens. Her whole face lighted. She simply radiated beauty.

'I have never been there. I shall love it. And—and——' She hesitated, and seemed to ask boldness from me.

'Well, my dear——?'

'Will you please to bring a book in your pocket?'

'A book, Lizzy. What kind of book?'

She stayed again. She looked as if she thought I wasn't going to believe her. 'I should like a poetry-book.'

May I be forgiven! I don't know that I did believe her. 'Are you sure you want that? I'll tell you why I ask you. I love poetry myself, and love reading poetry aloud—but only if I am sure the person who hears me likes to hear it. Now, people who don't like poetry don't like it at all. Do you see?'

She listened with lowered eyelids. 'Please bring one. I promise to tell you if I don't like it.' Agreed. I promised.

She came with me to the door, the beautiful, gentle, simple creature that she was, gave me

her true hand, and stood within the threshold, smiling me away. I went home—to call it so for want of a better word—with my heart melting in my breast. Much as I know of love, now in my age, much more as I know of its heights and deeps, I am sure that no man of more exalted or purer passion walked up Oxford Street that day.

CHAPTER XII

UNDER THE BLOSSOM

I AM tempted to linger over these few days of a happy summer—as what man would not be, who is a lover still? But I can only record that beginning, and must then leave it for other things, elements of labour and sorrow which, though we chose to disregard them, even then were edging it in. At all hazards, however, I must remark upon the first outing we two had ever had. The anticipation of it, the promise of a clear sky, the sun, the kindly west wind had wrought their magic upon my dear girl's looks. She sparkled and gleamed like a summer's morning. I saw it all latent in her before she was within speaking distance, noticing the lightness of her step as she came to meet me. She moved, as she always did, with that swimming gate which tall women often have (as the poets have observed); but there was added now a buoyant breasting of the air, as if she felt the crisping waves prick her into enhanced life. She had dressed herself in white, as suited so fine a day, with May about to wed June. She had a black hat and feather, a black sash at her waist, as women did in that day, and

do still if they know what they are about. 'I hope you feel what you show, Lizzy.' That made her blush. 'I feel what I ought,' she said, 'on such a day as this.' 'Oh, my dear,' I said—'we are going to be happy.' She sighed.

So we set off, all our cares left behind, and not even the dinginess of the Underground tarnished our hopes. All this happened before the time of tramways; before the top of an omnibus was feasible for ladies. Eighteen-eighty-odd! I remember that I proposed a hansom, being of that manly age when the spending of money is the natural outlet of happy youth, and that she begged me not. She said it was extravagant; but her real objection was that it would put her out of focus. She had taken her definite place in the scale of class, and her considered place. She could be happy in it, and only happy there. Mainwaring had forced her into a false position: she did not intend that I should do the same. She acted as much for my good as for her own, and I see now that she was wise.

So we travelled third-class on the Underground—and were entirely happy. 'Do you know,' she said—we were alone in the compartment—'this is the first time I have been out of London since I came to it?'

'My poor girl,' I began—but she laughed at me. 'That shows you what I am!'

'It shows me what I am, too, Lizzy. But I'll deserve you yet.' She was thinking of something else.

'I'm glad now that I saved it up. I have been all this time getting ready.'

I said to her, 'But now you have gone back to service again, you will get your yearly holiday, I suppose?'

She opened her eyes, rounding them—'Oh, of course I shall take that.' Then she went on, 'I might go at any time, now that he is in the North. He told me so. I ought to go home for a few days. I haven't seen Mother for two years.'

'Now is your time, then.' She looked at me for a moment, fully, seriously, then turned away. 'I'll go presently.'

Everything was new to her. It was like a voyage, and became so to me who had travelled Europe and Asia Minor. She loved the river at Hammersmith, and the glimpses of little staid old houses on the Mall. 'I could be happy in one of those little houses,' she said, 'if——'

'Oh, Lizzy,' I sighed, 'could you not be happy in any little house, or big house, *if*——?'

She nodded quickly, still straining back to catch the last of them and of the windy water. Then she turned to me. 'Yes, I dare say. But not in a big house. The happier I was the less I would choose a big house.' She puzzled it out. 'In a big house, you see, you might easily get lost.'

I suppose I frowned over that, for she grew eager. 'Oh, don't you see? We might have to be so far away from each other.' Yes, I saw that.

It made me feel that indeed we were so—and at this moment in a fool's paradise. But I put that away from me. Here we were, and *vogue la galère*! Meantime we reached our station.

Lizzy's eyes had not been educated to the complexities of art. She neither knew how to see, nor that she saw. She could appreciate detail, but not mass. Therefore the blended fires of the azaleas did not affect her, nor the feathery plumes of the bamboos; but she went into soft ecstasies over a white fritillary self-sown in a corner of the rock-garden. She saw how it hung in air, called it a fairy thimble, and loved it. She had no fine words for it, either. I had to read her quiet pleasure in her face. It seemed to me that she was taking in sight as a dog gets scent. She inhaled the ordered spaces, vistas, masses and groupings of the grassy place, all golden as they were in young leaves. She breathed them like fresh air, and was visibly the better for them. The glass-houses of orchids and other wonders did not amuse her. For the orchids particularly she showed distaste. Her fine nostrils dilated, her short lip curved upwards, as if the bow was on a stretch. 'They are like creatures. They seem to be wicked before your face—as if they didn't care what you saw.' That was as near as she could get. Her eyes sought the door, and the green, faint behind the misted glass. At last she said, 'I don't like this much. Let's get into the sun again.'

When we had seen the lions of the place she was all for sitting down. 'I should like to sit still, and you to read to me. Did you bring a book, as I asked you?'

'Of course I did. You shall stop me when you don't like it.' She lifted that off as nonsensical lumber by throwing up her chin. I saw my folly drop behind her.

I found a quiet place for her under some ilexes, in view of the lake. There we sat, and Lizzy disposed herself to listen, crossing one leg, nursing her cheek in her hand. She sometimes danced the suspended foot. Her eyes, so far as I could see, never wandered. Whenever I glanced at her, she was looking vaguely at the ground, but was intensely aware both of what was being said and of the situation. She said very little, and exactly what she felt—which was so like her. She was of all people I have known the least insincere. I am sure she would much rather have appeared stupid than pretended to sensibility.

I was armed with *The Golden Treasury*, and had made a selection overnight. There are tales in that anthology, which I had judged would please her most; and I began with the simplest of all of them, *Lucy Gray*. I took the trouble to school my voice to a low level, reading without expression, but very distinctly, as if it had been a police report of the child's disappearance—say, before the Coroner. I don't know any other way of giving good poetry a chance—for bad poetry you

may need a fashionable actor. But *Lucy Gray* is good poetry.

Evidently—as I could judge by the light in Lizzy's eyes—she was enormously relieved to find that she had followed every stave of the pretty story! Was that poetry? And I liked that? Why, and so did she! But that was guesswork of mine: I remember her comment on *Lucy Gray*. She confessed the sadness of it—'but somehow you can bear it. You can see that it had to be so.' Then she added, 'Poor child—perhaps, if she hadn't died, she would have been unhappy later on.' We had a little talk about it, and I was touched to find that she spoke of *Lucy Gray* as if she was a real person. So she was, of course—but that is not my point.

After that I read *Poor Susan*, and *The Daffodils*, and then *The Cuckoo*. She liked the last best. I went back then to *Helen of Kirconnell*, and *Willie Drowned in Yarrow*—but she had nothing to say to either of them. I gave her 'Jack and Joan they think no ill'; the *Elegy*, and finally *Auld Robin Gray*. That brought the tears to her eyes, as indeed it had to mine. I asked her if it hurt. She said, 'No, no. I like it. It is beautiful. It does me good.' And then she asked me to read it again, 'but slower.' When it was done, she drooped her chin towards her breast. 'Life's just like that. But it can still be beautiful.' I read her some more ambitious things—*The Scholar Gypsy* was one, and *The Forsaken Merman* another.

Then I stopped, and she thanked me with a pretty gesture of confidence which was almost a caress—the wraith, you may say, of a caress. ‘Now I know,’ she said, ‘that I like something that *you* like.’

‘You like lots of things that I like,’ I told her. ‘I don’t believe you like anything that I don’t like.’

‘Will you lend me the book now?’

‘My dear, I’ll give it you, if you will accept it.’

She took it, and looked to see if it had my name in it. It had not. ‘Write my name in it, please, and the date.’ That was done. I said, ‘I’ll carry it for you till I leave you.’ But she wanted to carry it herself, and I saw it closed against her breast.

We had tea in one of the little houses on Kew Green, and walked homewards in the golden afternoon light, on the river-bank. I never saw her tired in those days; but a veil of sadness came over her, and came between us, which we each made efforts to rend. She said—it was one of her efforts—‘Well, I’ve had to-day, at any rate. I expect I shall be glad of it, often.’

‘Only the afternoon, Lizzy.’

‘No, no,’ she said; ‘all day. I had all the morning to think of it.’ Then she sighed, and her head drooped. ‘After all, we are only pretending, aren’t we?’

‘Oh, my dear, you don’t believe that. You don’t believe that I’m a humbug?’

She was wide-eyed and all alert. 'Oh, no, no, no. You don't understand. I mean that we might—that it might have been different if—Oh, but I don't know.'

'If we had met before?— Ah, Lizzy.' She was now mighty serious.

'Do you think that it ever answers—with people so different as you and I?'

I told her that I didn't think the difference need matter a straw if there were resemblances underneath. I believed it, and I still believe it. If the differences are superficial—as those which she was thinking of certainly were—they can't prevail against affinities such as I saw between myself and this beautiful girl. It is the elementals which count in the long run.

So I told her, and gave her to understand that I loved her. She heard that quietly, without any demonstration or without revealing the state of her own heart. I understood that that would have been against her instinct and moral code. But when she presently said that, in that case, she thought that we ought not to meet, I had to fight for my own hand—or at any rate so I said. 'Lizzy,' I said, 'can't you trust me?'

'Yes,' she said in a low voice, 'I know that—but——' She turned away her head. I waited

Then she said, 'The more beautiful you make my life for me, the harder it will be. I have done for myself, you see. I have made my bed, and I

must lie on it.' She drew to me, and touched my arm. I thought she would have taken it, but no—— 'We mustn't meet often—not every week. I can't do it—don't ask me. If you will lend me some books I shall be very grateful. Will you do that? Tell me what to read—and I'll make myself better. I might do it by being with you—but I must not. Shall it be like that?'

I was young, you see, and awfully in love. No doubt I was disappointed—but her sincerity was beyond doubt.

'Everything shall be as you think best, Lizzy,' I told her. 'I shall write to you once a week, and you shall answer when you can, and tell me when I may see you. I can't have you reproaching yourself. That hurts too much. If I can't make your life happier I am no good to you. I know I ought not to have said what I did. But you know it quite well——'

I take credit to myself that I didn't press her on that point. There's nothing a young lover glories in so much as a woman's confession that she knows what's the matter with him. I don't know what I thought could be the upshot of all this—I don't know that I thought about that at all. I loved her, and that was enough for me. But if my dear girl thought—as she did—that things were going to be any better for our discomfort, she was mistaken.

I took her to her door, and left her there. Her mood was wistful and very tender; but she had

herself under control. We parted with a hand-clasp; and she was to have her books the next day.

I may as well record with what she began her education in literature. I sent her *Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, and intended to follow on them with Sir Walter Scott. As for poetry, she should have that through me and by voice and ear.

CHAPTER XIII

MAINWARING AND SIR JOHN

I CONFESS, never having been interested in politics, except as a part of the expression of life, that I knew very little what Mainwaring was doing at Jarrow. So long as he remained there a long time, I cared very little, either. I was not much of a newspaper-reader, and still less of a club-man; but it was not possible to be altogether ignorant, and I had gathered from newsbills and casual conversations that he had his enemies in the press. There was one paper in particular, perhaps the first of the type with which we have become abundantly familiar, which seemed to have a knife into him. That was *The London Messenger*, whose aim very simply was to make itself indispensable in everybody's affairs. It was personal, it was sensational, it stuck at nothing. Having found out that bad news paid it better than good news—since the public runs to know the worst but can afford to wait for comfortable things until a comfortable moment—it dealt in clamour. When there was no reality about which to be clamorous, it was not above finding a substitute. In politics it was high Tory, with a leaning to explosive patriotism.

Bentivoglio was its hero, to whom it owed the Empire of India, Peace with Honour, and other filling phrases which lent themselves to public-house arguments and Hyde Park oratory. But *The Messenger* went a great deal further than that. It took all public affairs in charge, and was the first newspaper to send its reporters into criminal investigations. If a murder occupied the public, *The Messenger's* young man made inquiry and report; if it was a strike, they were ready and eager to compose it by negotiation, or by threats. One Sir John Copestake was the proprietor of this print, and like a great many other people he took himself with great seriousness, and his self-appointed office also. It was with him and his organ that Mainwaring now found himself embroiled.

The Messenger had never left him alone from the time when he first became public property in the Trafalgar Square riot. Never a week passed, after that, without some reference to his detriment. It was *The Messenger* which nicknamed him The Fenian; but his friends adopted that with enthusiasm. In the Culgaith strike it made a push to have him prosecuted for conspiracy; but he was so successful up there that the thought was abandoned as hopeless. Then came his election, which made *The Messenger* foam at the press, and since that another Election, a Liberal triumph, and Mainwaring's *rapprochement* with the Government. The affair of attack was

greatly eased by that last development. With the Government it would batter Mainwaring, with Mainwaring the Government. It made public property at once of the fact that Mainwaring had gone up to Jarrow on an unofficial mission from the Ministry. There were government works at Jarrow which might become involved in the Boilermakers' strike. Mainwaring was to prevent that. Now if it became known, firstly that the Government chose a notorious demagogue to arbitrate in a trade dispute, or secondly that a popular tribune went into a labour trouble with a government manacle on his leg, serious damage would be done, or might be done to both parties, to say nothing of the boilermaking industry. The first act, therefore, of *The Messenger's* was to proclaim upon a bill 'The Fenian as Strike-Breaker,' and to declare in a leading article what Mainwaring's real business at Jarrow was. Having established that as a solid pillar of fact—solid because it had been stated as a fact in a leading article—it proceeded to crucify Mainwaring upon it day by day. The Government was greatly embarrassed at Westminster, and I don't doubt that Mainwaring was, at Jarrow. I heard that he flatly denied his semi-official *status*—which Mr Hardman was incapable of doing. More than that, Mainwaring promised that when the strike was over he should have revelations to make in his turn: meantime, he said, he was not the man to be turned aside from his duty by

newspaper touts. The Jarrow strike, therefore, became a side-issue of another contest altogether, and the public, which cares little for strikes, and very much for dog-fights, was highly excited.

I collected so much from what I heard or read, but nothing directly. Lizzy knew nothing, either. Mainwaring never wrote to her. His letters were sent to a private address—Longwaitby Hall, Sunderland—from which I saw, not without amusement, that the day was gone by for sharing the people's miseries. Mainwaring now went down as a god from a machine. I don't doubt that Lizzy remarked on that, too. There were few things about Mainwaring which escaped her. But she said nothing about it—indeed, we should never have talked of him at all if he had not been put in our way by other people. Then it became necessary for the poor girl to do something—but I shall come to that presently.

I saw her at this time about once a fortnight, when I took her out either on a week-day or a Sunday, as might suit. At other times she took one of the maids in the house as her companion. In June she went to her people at Merrow for a fortnight; and during that fortnight it happened that I saw Mainwaring in a hansom, and an evening or two afterwards met him at a great house. That house was not the Whitehavens'. I believe that he was now denied the door there. It was at her sister's, the Duchess of Leven's, that I came upon him. He had been dining there,

obviously, and was in great form upstairs when I arrived, playing the fool among a lot of people, as he could when he chose. What made his sallies so comic was that he was always serious himself. Preposterous things were said in a tone of cold exasperation—as if they were wrung out of a strong man in an agony. He never laughed—I never saw or heard a laugh from him; but he had people in tears all about him, some praying him to stop.

Lady Whitehaven was there, and so was her pretty, frail, foolish girl, Lady Mary Pointsett. I judged that things were not well between Mainwaring and his lady. He talked at her most of the time; and though she undoubtedly laughed, I could see that she held off him. But her poor girl seemed bewitched. She couldn't take her eyes away. That was not a pleasant thing to see. I didn't know then what a fool the child was, nor what a double fool her mother.

I remember one thing and can't leave it out. It was a young people's party that night, and we were playing some card-game round a table—a very noisy game in which everybody talked, and cheating was allowed so long as it was not found out. The Duchess was in a wild humour and said whatever came into her head. She accused Mainwaring of all the shifts charged against him by *The Messenger*, and going on from bad to worse taxed him with having 'a pretty wife' somewhere in the dark. I don't know why—it was no worse

than half-a-dozen things she had said—but that shot was followed by a dead silence. I could not look at Lady Whitehaven, who alone, with me, knew the truth. Mainwaring received the charge without the change of a muscle. He raised his eyebrows and looked over at the Duchess, with his card suspended in the air.

‘A wife, or wives, did you say, Duchess? Why should I deny it? You would never believe me if I denied it six times, but would wait for the crowing cock. No, no, I’ll not deny it; but I’ll refer you to my friend here. You will take his word for it.’

All eyes were upon me. I had to decide quickly. It was rage that put me right.

‘My dear Mainwaring,’ I said, ‘I can only say that I have often been at your house, but that I have never yet seen anyone there who could possibly be considered as the mistress of it.’ Lady Whitehaven was shuffling her cards. Lady Mary’s eyes were intently upon Mainwaring. Mainwaring looked impudently at the Duchess. ‘Hear him! Many thanks, my dear man, for a coat of white-wash.’ Then he slapped down his King of Trumps, and took the pool. I had some talk with him afterwards, but he did not refer to that incident at all. He told me that he was in town to put some whalebone into old Hardman’s frock-coat. ‘If they would leave me alone I could pull them out of the broth—but they won’t do one thing or the other. They are all more or

less in it like flies—and when I get them to a dry place they spend their time in cleaning their legs.’

He said that there would be a general strike up there within a week. ‘Nothing can help it—and I’ll take care that nothing does.’

‘And what will Hardman say to that?’

‘My boy, he’ll live to thank me.’

I asked him if Lizzy had come up, but he waved her away. ‘No, no. I’m not staying at home. She’s with her folks, and much better where she is.’ Then he turned away to Lady Mary, who was waiting for him, and talked to her for the rest of the time that I was there. I had a few words with Lady Whitehaven, who evidently wanted them.

‘You were very ready, I thought, just now,’ she said, by way of beginning. ‘I was thankful he didn’t refer it to me. I shouldn’t have known what line to take. But you did it awfully well.’

‘I told the truth,’ I said. ‘It isn’t a pleasant truth at all—but there it is.’

‘Yes, indeed.’ She looked sympathetic—her head on one side. ‘I can’t help saying, you know, that the dear creature makes it almost impossible. Doesn’t she?’

I said coldly that I didn’t see what else she could do. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘one thing or the other.’ Then she told me that she had seen Lizzy before she went away, and had had a great shock. ‘She opened the door to me—in full fig, you know.

I wasn't at all prepared for it. She looked ravishing, I must say. She is a lovely person—and I'm very, very fond of her. But really—poor man. It makes it almost impossible.'

I said that she must look at the other side of things too. He had married her against her will on the understanding that he was definitely taking a step down. She had been almost a corner-stone of his political edifice. But after Culgaith he began to take steps up. Well—she wasn't prepared for that. She wasn't ready. She didn't believe in what he was doing. She felt that she had been tricked. She was absolutely honest and could not bring herself to play a part. Underlying the force with which I spoke was my conviction that it was Lady Whitehaven's doing.

I think she knew that, for, as once before, she deprecated my indignation.

'I know what you mean, of course. I can't help feeling that the whole thing was a great mistake. How are we to tell what happened? Whether it was his passion for her which drew him to the people, or his feeling for the people which committed him to her? In either case one can't blame him—but one can't approve, can one? You see, I have been mixed up with politics all my life—just as my sister is. It is so immensely important to our party that he should be one of us—and now he is tied by the leg to a sweet, good woman, and can't rise because she won't. Why, think only of this. If he hadn't been married he

would never have taken that absurd great cave of a house. He would have given his parties at the House of Commons, or anywhere—— Oh, it really is a sad thing. You must see that. I am determined that he shall take office. He will, you'll see, after this Jarrow affair. There is a tremendous thing hanging upon that. If he succeeds in all his plans he will prove himself simply indispensable to us. Oh, my dear Mr Whitworth, I do wish I could make you see what we all feel about it.'

I contained myself. But I asked her whether she had said all this to Lizzy. She declared that she hadn't said a word of it. 'To tell you the truth,' she said, 'I couldn't have done it. She has a way of being unapproachable. She seems perfectly simple, and yet one feels, don't you know, that she is judging one all the time.'

That in its way was comic. Lizzy, of course, seemed simple because she was so. Lady Whitehaven wasn't at all used to direct dealing in anything, being herself the least simple of women.

But I told her one or two things which she wasn't prepared for. 'Lizzy,' I said, 'is doing what she thinks her duty by Mainwaring; but she is not doing it by inclination. She thinks that Mainwaring is not doing his duty by her, but that, according to her, is his affair—not hers at all. At the same time she is a proud woman. On the least hint from him she would go. I don't know whether he knows that—but I know it

myself perfectly well. She would go, and without a sixpence from him. I'd go to the stake on that.'

She heard me thoughtfully—but I saw a smile hovering. Presently it broke.

'She has a champion, at all events I wonder if she knows how devoted you are.'

'Not only does she know it,' I said, 'but Mainwaring knows it too.'

'He is dangerous—I dare say you know that.'

I stared. 'Do you mean that he might think—? I assure you that he knows Lizzy much better than that.' The malice cleared from her lips, and she dismissed me with pure benevolence. 'She must be a saint, from what you tell me,' she said. 'No,' I said, getting up; 'she's not that at all. But she's true to type. I fancy that her mother must be a fine woman.' She turned away her head. I saw rather than heard her sigh, and at that moment, or the next, I saw that I had been too apt. I saw Lady Mary looking up with adoration at Mainwaring, who was hectoring her from his height. The pretty creature was drinking him in through parted lips. I was very young for my years—I felt a horror of the place I was in.

'Look at those two. Isn't it comic?' That was how the Duchess took my farewells. Comic!

Going out into the street I heard the howling newsboys proclaiming a general strike at Jarrow.

CHAPTER XIV

LIZZY BIDS ME GO

WHILE Lizzy was away we corresponded like two friends, or say relatives; but, on my side at least, when she returned we met like lovers. I don't know what made me keep the door of my lips, I am sure. If I had not, she would have given me hers. I don't doubt that. It is necessary to say—and I know it, because it took me some pains to find it out for myself—that in Lizzy's world the kiss is still the customary greeting, and that the kiss is given and taken by the lips. She would have kissed me that afternoon at Charing Cross because she was tender towards me, and very glad to see me; but she did not. I take no credit to myself for that: it is the fact that I wished so much to kiss her, and that it would have meant so much more to me than to her, that I dared not do it. In her it would have been an expression, in me a betrayal. I took her hand, and held it. 'Oh, my dear, I'm glad of you.' She stood before me, trembling and glowing, not looking at me. It was a beating moment—and it had to content me. I took her luggage from her, and then we went together to my rooms, which were in Buckingham Street, close by. The passion of our

meeting still held us. I don't think we spoke a word to each other until we were in the room. Then the air changed. I became the host, and she was the visitor. I knew that she would feel shy, and turned all my will to putting her at her ease. I made her take off her jacket and hat. I said that I was going to pretend for an hour that she was at home. She laughingly lent herself to it. All I know is that I never felt her so little at home as she was that afternoon.

I lighted the gas and put the kettle on the ring. Meantime she was at the books, amazed at the number—and certainly there were a good many. She found Sir Walter Scott's shelf and a half, and gave a little cry of dismay. 'Oh, I shall never read them all!' Then she pointed to the gap. 'That's where mine comes from. I've brought it back.' It was *The Heart of Midlothian*. We talked about that. What struck her most about it was the change in Effie Deans after she had married her Staunton. She became fat and discontented. 'That might have happened to me,' she said, 'with anybody else.' After a time of silence she broke out: 'He doesn't care for me at all. I don't think he ever did after the very first.'

I told her that I had met him a few nights earlier at Leven House, and her eyes went quite pale. 'Was he in London? Not at Montagu Square?'

'No. He told me that he wasn't staying there. He knew you were away.'

'Yes, I told him I was going,' she said. Then she suddenly became vehement. It was evident to me that she had been thinking about her position. 'I have almost made up my mind that I shall go away. I wanted to talk about it. I did talk to Mother, and she thinks I ought to. I don't feel that I can go on. It is making me very unhappy. Mother didn't know it was so bad until I told her. Of course she guessed something—not all.'

'Did you tell her all, Lizzy?' She had been looking at me, her eyes hot with her wrongs; but when I asked her that the expression in them changed. She looked down, hanging her head.

'No,' she murmured, 'I didn't tell her everything. How could I?'

She touched me, and wrung my conscience too. 'You think I have done you wrong, Lizzy?' Her look was full of grief, but she did not falter.

'I think we have both been wrong.' I turned away my head.

'I didn't tell you before I went home,' she said, 'that Lady Whitehaven came to see me. I wanted to—but I felt I must think it out by myself.'

'She told me she had been, the other night,' I said. Lizzy's voice was sharp.

'Did she tell you what she had talked about?'

'No. I didn't ask her.'

'She talked about nothing but you and me. She seemed to think it made it all right. It was

that that made me think it must be wrong.' I groaned.

'So it is, my dear. God knows I didn't mean to hurt you.' She started forward and knelt before me. My face was in my hands, and I felt the warmth of her cheeks upon them.

'The only happiness I have ever known has been from you,' she said. 'I don't know what I shall do without you. What am I to do?'

It was she who took my hands from my face—but it was my own act that made me look at her—see her beautiful eyes filled with tears, and show her mine.

'Ah, my dear, my dear, how can I tell?' I said brokenly, and took her in my arms. There she stayed while her despair tore at her. If we had kissed then, we might have been forgiven. We knew it was for the last time. But, by a miracle, we did not.

She withdrew herself gently from my arms and crouched on the floor, her arm resting on my knee.

'Now I know that we must part,' she said. But it was my turn.

'We don't part, Lizzy,—now, until I know what you are going to do. I can bear anything that you can bear, if I only know what it is.'

She said that she would stay as she was at Montagu Square unless she was forced to go by anything fresh. If he made another scene with Lady Whitehaven she would leave him. If she left him she should go back into service and begin

life all over again under her maiden name. She promised me that I should know from time to time where she was and how she was. And I was to tell her too about myself—whether ill or well. In fact, we might write to each other now and then, and she was to receive, and return, her books—but that was all we could do.

It was dreadfully on her conscience that we had put ourselves fatally in the wrong; but I couldn't have her think that. I told her of myself that I had never been in love before—that I should never love anyone else. That she accepted. I said that she had married Mainwaring against her own judgment and on a false pretence; that she had been an obedient wife to him until he had ceased to want her company. That too she allowed. But when I tried to persuade her that her love for me was inevitable and justifiable, she shook her head sadly, and would not be convinced. 'No, no—it is wrong. I love you, but I ought not. And there's another thing. Supposing I could do it, I am sure I ought not to let you marry me.'

'If you could do it, Lizzy,' I said, 'you would have to marry me.'

I could see that she was not convinced; but she threw that part of the puzzle overboard. 'Well—I can't. So we won't talk about it.' She got up slowly. 'Now I must go,' she said.

The pain at my heart was like the wailing of the wind. I carried on from point to point like a

child. The one thing that helped me through just now was the certainty that before she left me she would kiss me. One can act a miracle once—but not twice.

And she did it. In her hat and jacket, with her veil thrown up, she lay in my arms, close against my heart, and gave me her cold lips. It was like kissing a dead woman. And that was the first and the last. I carried her bag to the omnibus, and saw her into the machine. My last view was of her pale sad face. She looked at me, did not raise her hand. I saw her lips move.

I have no earthly doubt but she was right. I had put her in the wrong, and now she put me in the right—so far as a wrong can be undone. In the way of a man, I had made her happy only to make her more unhappy afterwards. I had not helped her in the slightest degree, and by my wrongdoing had made it impossible that I should help her again. As people look on these things nowadays, I should perhaps have talked her into surrender. I had passion enough to do it—or I should have had with any other woman. But I can remember how I looked upon that woman. Her purity was a part of her beauty. It was the unearthly element in her which made her walk this world before me as if she was not of it. Certainly I was not better than most young men, though I had never had anything but disgust for purchased love. But I could not have made Lizzy Mainwaring a sinner,

or been a sinner myself with her. That is no virtue in me, but of the nature of her being. If the goddesses of Greece are the prototypes of ourselves, in Lizzy Mainwaring you may read Hestia, the Goddess of the Hearth. She stood in her modesty, beauty, and truth for the Moral Law.

CHAPTER XV

REFLECTIONS OF A BANISHED LOVER

AFTER three days and nights of misery and intolerable restlessness, which only sheer cowardice kept me from spending opposite the house in Montagu Square, I suddenly recovered my courage and hope. I don't know how that was. I woke on a certain morning full of the privilege of my pain. To know that I was suffering for the sake of the most beautiful woman in London seemed to me at the moment sufficient reward. I don't say that it lasted—indeed it didn't—but it gave me time to collect myself, and a chance also of seeing that my hand was not played out.

I had all sorts of schemes in my head, but for the moment I decided to spend a week with my sister in Somerset. She had married a rich parson named Jagow and lived in a place called Weston Court. I wrote to Lizzy that I was going.

Agatha was older than me by five years—which is a good deal when it means that she was five-and-thirty. Jagow, I don't doubt, was ten years more. She respected my independence so much that she had no reprobation for my desultory way

of living, which was one of the things about myself I was resolved to amend. But Agatha, who lived among great people herself,—being undoubtedly ‘county’—took it for granted that, having enough to live upon, I did nothing, and mixed only with my kind—that is, her kind. So she plunged me into talk of the Whitehavens and all the rest of them; and then I found that Jágow was following Mainwaring’s career with intelligent interest. He told me what he was doing up at Jarrow all this while. Evidently, while he disapproved of him, being naturally a Conservative, he had a respect for the position he was making for himself. ‘A discreditable beginning,’ said Jagow, ‘but we must remember that it was a beginning. The man has ability, and is doing better. We may yet see him a respectable member of society. I must say that he has ended the strikes very satisfactorily, and so far as I can judge he has done it alone. *The Times* had a leader about him the other morning. It said that Mainwaring had made a great stride forward.’

I learned that there had been a general strike for a week, during which negotiations presumably went on. Then Mainwaring made a great speech in Monkwearmouth, announcing that it was all over. The leaders of the Union had accepted the masters’ terms, and work was resumed the next day. That night Mainwaring was in the House, and had a great reception. My brother-in-law read me Hardman’s speech of compliment, the

hero's reply, and Bentivoglio's caustic summing-up of the whole—Righteousness and Peace kissing each other, and so on. He did not forget the parable of the Prodigal Son, either.

I found all this rather artless and delivered it as my opinion that Mainwaring had probably engineered the general strike for the purpose of composing it afterwards. That shows how angry I was; for that was, in so many words, what *The Messenger* said. My brother-in-law looked at me as if I was blaspheming. To him a successful politician was a figure from an illustrated Bible. He might be badly drawn, but his origin put him above criticism.

Agatha spoke of the Whitehavens' friendship for him, and seemed to think that excused a great deal. She told me that Lord Gerald Gorges was at home—which I had not known. She fondly supposed that the young man was going to marry Lady Mary—unless, she said, Mainwaring did! She knew nothing of the lady-mother's little affairs of the heart, good soul, and it wasn't for me to enlighten her. But I saw trouble ahead if that news was true, and dreaded some share of it for Lizzy.

My dear girl wrote to me once while I was at Weston. She told me that Mainwaring was at home. 'But I see very little of him. He only has his breakfast here—I don't know what time he comes home. I don't think he is happy with his success. He is going to law, I think. Against

The Messenger. He has not spoken to me about it—but that is what I hear. I am happiest when I am reading. I have finished *Guy Mannering*.' She had chosen that one herself for the sake of its name. 'When you come back I should like *The Bride of Lammermoor*. I hope she was happier than I have been.'

I wondered what Mainwaring was going to do with *The Messenger*. Probably an action for libel. They must have gone one step too far, and given him his chance. He was not the man to miss that. But I read on.

'We had a dinner-party on Tuesday. Lord and Lady Whitehaven came, and a daughter, Lady Mary Pointsett—pretty and delicate-looking. The lady did not speak to me except to say, "Good-evening, Lizzy," as she came in. There were other people there—so we had men to help wait, and a man to carve. I am afraid things are as bad as ever. He is not happy, I can see, and not at all well. They talked of *The Messenger* case. He said that he should win it, and then there would be a surprise for everybody. I heard him tell the lady that. He went to court on Wednesday. The daughter, Lady Mary I mean, was very quiet, and seemed to watch him all dinner-time. She hardly spoke to the men beside her. When they went away he went with them, and I don't know when he came back. I should die if I lived like that. I'm glad I am different, and would not change for anything in the world. You

would not wish me to, would you?' She signed herself 'Yours sincerely, Lizzy.' No, indeed, I would not have wished her to change from what she was.

I felt restless and miserable again, and the placid atmosphere of well-ordered Weston only exasperated my complaint. I found that smug life of superior beings made me much worse. Well-ordering, too, came into my ideal—I dreamed of it all day long—an infinite, loving care for detail, but redeemed from frivolity by the fact that one did all the work oneself. After all, you can do no more than fulfil well the laws of your being. But if you pay other people to fulfil them for you, how are you or the world the better for them? It is a belief of mine that, impalpably, imperceptibly, the nation, even the world, is the better for one family life lived piously and diligently. I would burn in defence of that. But to order your life by means of paid servants! You might as well hire a man to beget your children, as a nurse to bring them up, or a pedagogue to launch them upon the world. These ideas, however, were not for Weston Court; so I took them away with me, back to London.

I had a book on hand—indeed, it had been long on hand: a study of comparative Ethics. I was trying to study the morality of Birds, and was really interested in it, until my own affairs compelled me to study rather the ethics of my own species. I was now much more prepared to

compare the morality of classes of men: the standards, for instance, of Lizzy Mainwaring and Rose Whitehaven—what a subject there! And that brought me to my own morality, and Mainwaring's, and advised me to set my soul's house in order before I could safely discuss those of other people.

There was continuously before my mind's eye the figure of that noble girl, one of the most lovely of God's creatures, engaged all her days of perfect growth in menial tasks—scrubbing, rubbing, washing, sweeping, laying fires, raking ashes, and goodness knows what besides. In no way did I think her degraded—on the contrary, she made the acts beautiful by performing them. That she should be hired to do them—that did not degrade her, either; but knowing very well how little I could bear it that she should serve me so, unless in equivalents I could serve her, so it seemed now to me that I had better fit myself for her companionship, and hire no more. Let me see if I could keep my rooms clean as well as myself; cook my meals as well as eat them. I took immediate steps to that end, and found myself very much the better for them. A friend of mine, to whom I confided my readjustments and the motives of them, thought that I ought to go further. 'You should, to be really self-sufficient,' he said, 'make your own trousers, and wash your own shirts. I am not sure that you would not be well-advised to kill your own mutton, if not

to grow it, and brew your own beer. The roof of your house might be a good place in which to grow the corn to make your hot rolls of. But you will come to that by degrees, no doubt. The only drawback I can see immediately to your plans is that you will cut into the hours which you owe to the Morals of Birds. Perhaps the subject does not press?' I said that it did not.

Pressing or not, I took it in hand, and found it a good distraction until I had a better. I had not long to wait for that. In the autumn the case of *Mainwaring v. Copestake* and another came on for hearing. That was in November, and I am now come to the end of July. For the interval, the House rose in the middle of August. Mainwaring went out of town with the rest of the great world—and I don't know where, nor could Lizzy tell me. She, having taken what holiday she thought she was entitled to, remained in Montagu Square, with a caretaker or one or other of the maids. As for me, I couldn't take myself away from her neighbourhood, even though I could not see her. Therefore the Morals of Birds did something towards the morals of one exceedingly love-sick man; and Lizzy reached *The Fair Maid of Perth* in her studies.

CHAPTER XVI

MAINWARING IN THE BOX

MAINWARING'S case was in the vivacious hands of Sir James Bustle, Q.C., as leader. It was an action for damages for libel contained in certain leading and certain descriptive articles in *The Messenger*. The gist of them all was that Mainwaring had been double-dealing at Jarrow, being unofficially but really there on the part of the Government, and secretly in the pay of the Trade Unions engaged in the strike or in sympathy with the strikers. It was said, among other things, that he was the paid representative of the Culgaith colliers in Parliament, in receipt from them of £300 a year; that his election expenses had been paid; that he had organised, directed and maintained the Culgaith strike, and was at Jarrow for the same purpose. Finally, it had been said in so many words that he had persuaded the other labour organisations of Jarrow to join the striking body, and bring about a paralysis of social life in that place. He had been called a nihilist, an anarchist, an International, and a great deal more—but, it was said, he laughed at such things. The libel lay in the charge of duplicity—false dealing

with the Government which employed him, equally false dealing with the Trade Unions. He took hire from both, and cheated each. That, I think, was the charge—though perhaps I am not lawyer enough to apprehend it exactly. It lost nothing in the relating by Sir James, and occupied the Court* for three or four days. Mainwaring was under cross-examination for the whole of one of them.

I was in court that day, unable to keep out of it for fear that he might be asked about his private life, and Lizzy involved in the hateful business. It was full to the doors—half the House of Commons was there, I should think, and all Mainwaring's friends. The Duchess of Leven and her sister were beside the Judge; with Lady Whitehaven I saw her daughter, who looked dreadfully ill—I never saw eyes in a girl like hers—fixed and sightless, like blind blue flowers. What the woman was about to bring her there, God knows. I am not good enough psychologist myself to understand the twists in the mind of a woman of fashion.

Mainwaring was at his best. He looked well and spoke well. He was quite at his ease, and answered his questions simply. He gave the impression of concealing nothing because there was nothing to conceal. In chief, he related the whole business—or so it appeared. The Prime Minister had sent for him, he said, knowing his interest in labour questions. He saw him at the Treasury;

with him had been the President of the Board of Trade, some permanent officials, whom he named, and a secretary or two. The Prime Minister had begun by saying that the Government was interested in the dispute, collaterally rather than directly. There were Government yards in the district, and Government contracts in the affected works. It was not advisable, it was against policy, that the Government should intervene directly in a trade dispute—'a most inconvenient precedent,' he said, might be grounded upon such action. He then asked Mainwaring if he was personally interested in the matter. Mainwaring replied, Not at all, except in so far as he was, and was known to be, in sympathy with workmen. The P.M. then said that that answer cleared the ground. The Government, predisposed to sympathy itself with labour, desired just such a legate. He then explained at length the line he wished to be followed, and ended by asking Mainwaring to undertake it. Mainwaring replied without hesitation that he would, on condition that he had a free hand. There was some conversation upon that—in fact, a good deal. Finally, it was reduced to heads on paper, and initialed. His expenses would be paid, but he was not to be bound by the result. He produced the half-sheet of paper, and it was read in court. After that he gave his account of his embassy, and gave it admirably. Up to a point, according to him, all went well. 'I kept order in the place. I knew how to do

that, for I had done it before. The men trusted me, and followed me; for they knew me and what I had done before. I was in a fair way to succeed—to serve the Government, which I believed to be honest, and the men, whom I knew to be so; but——’ There he stopped. ‘But you failed?’ That was Sir James Bustle. ‘But I failed.’ That was Mainwaring; and there for a moment he stopped, and then went on, gathering cold vehemence as he spoke—picking it up, as an express locomotive picks up cold water and turns it to energy and speed. ‘There were forces against me, forces that worked in the dark. There were men there who cared for neither side, nor for right, nor for wrong; men who lusted to bring me down into the dust, and would hesitate at nothing to achieve it. In my absence upon the vital point—while I was in London engaged with them that had sent me—my enemies succeeded in making themselves enemies of my country. A general strike was declared, and for a week Revolution was in the air. If I was able to tread out the torch of civil war, it is no thanks to them.’ On that Sir James sharply sat down; the great Sir Vernon Parke hitched up his gown, as he might have girded his loins, and like a Renaissance David faced his black-bearded Goliath.

After the preliminaries, very short and unimportant, Sir Vernon, at his airiest, planted a dart.

‘You are, I think, a member of the Reform Club, Mr Mainwaring?’

'I am.'

'And of one or two other clubs, I think?'

'Of one or two other clubs.'

'Of one in particular known as the Green Cloth Club?'

'Of that one, yes.'

'You play card-games there? Games of chance?'

'Games of chance, and occasionally games of skill.'

'No doubt, no doubt. But let me deal with games of chance first. Can you tell me some games of chance which you play at the Green Cloth? Do you play baccarat?'

'I have played it there.'

'No doubt. Faro?'

'Faro also.'

'Hazard?'

'Yes, I have shaken the bones there.'

'Ah. You have shaken them to some purpose, I fancy.'

'I have shaken them to a purpose which I have not always brought off.'

'But on one occasion you brought off, as you say, some £3000?'

'On one occasion I did.'

'When was that?'

'Some time in April, that was.'

'From whom did you bring off that substantial sum?'

'Sir Hugh Perron lost it to me.'

'And of course paid you?'

'Of course.'

'Thereupon, Mr Mainwaring, you wrote, I believe, to the Radical Association in your constituency, renouncing your salary?'

'I did not, indeed.'

'Let us be sure of that, if you please. You did renounce your salary?'

'I had no salary from the Radical Association.'

'Had you, or had you not, quarterly payments from your constituency?'

'I had quarterly payments from an organisation of which I was secretary.'

'What organisation was that?'

'The Culgaith Miners' Union.'

'Ah. And those payments you renounced?'

'I did.'

'When did you renounce them?'

'Last January.'

'Before you renounced them had you brought off any purpose of yours at the Green Cloth Club?'

'I had not.'

'You play games of chance elsewhere, I believe?'

'Sometimes.'

'Where, sir?'

'At the houses of my friends; occasionally at my own house.'

'Can you tell the jury of an occasion when you brought off some purpose?'

Mainwaring paused, as if he was reflecting whom

he should betray. Then he said slowly and distinctly, 'I won a shilling from Lord Whitehaven at Snooker-pool. But that is a game of skill, Sir Vernon, as you know.' There was a murmur over that. Sir Vernon Parke was known to be fond of billiards by every barrister in court. I saw old Whitehaven crimson with joy. But Sir Vernon grew nasty.

'Did you ever play baccarat at Leven House, Mr Mainwaring?'

'Yes, I did.'

'Did you win, or lose?'

'I did both.'

'How much have you won there?'

'I can't tell you. I have kept no count.'

'How much have you lost there?'

'The Duke may tell you that.'

'Or perhaps the Duchess?'

'I dare say she will, if you ask her. She is here.'

'Your means, Mr Mainwaring, are small?'

'Very small.'

'You live upon what you earn?'

'Upon what I make—yes.'

'Your friends have assisted you?'

'They have been very good.'

'The Duchess of Leven in particular?'

'The Duchess of Leven likes my politics and believes in me.'

'Why did you renounce your salary as Secretary to the Association in Culgaith?'

'Because I desired to serve the State rather than a private body.'

'Did you give up your duties in respect of which you were paid?'

'No.'

'Do you hold those duties to be consistent with service of the State?'

'I do indeed, Sir Vernon, and that is where you and I are not likely to agree.'

He was pressed on this at great and wearisome length, but was not hurt by anything to be had from him. 'I conceive,' he said, 'that I am serving the State if I enable the State to deal fairly by hard-working and distressed citizens.' That was applauded.

So far Parke had touched the fringes of his matter. If his object was to show that Mainwaring was a needy adventurer—which I knew to be quite true—he had not done it. Mainwaring had been too wary for him. Now he tackled him upon his politics, which was, so to speak, closing with his adversary. He left his French career out altogether, either not knowing much about it or as thinking it would not tell with the jury, and began instead with the riot in Trafalgar Square.

'Be your opinions what they may have been, you took a prominent part in that meeting?'

'I took a part.'

'You spoke at that meeting?'

'Yes.'

'And yours was the last speech before the rioting?'

'Mine was the speech interrupted by the police.'

'Were your last words before you left the plinth, "To hell with the police!"?'

'I should not be surprised. It is a term of endearment with us in Ireland.'

'But you were not in Ireland, Mr Mainwaring. You were in Trafalgar Square. Did you use those words?'

'They are the sort of words I should use when I saw the police provoking bloodshed.'

'Did you use them, sir?'

'How can I tell you? I use words of the kind when I can't fasten my shirt-collar. The police, who were mounted, were hustling the people. It was a dangerous moment.'

'You have not yet answered my question, sir.'

'Sir Vernon, I am a quick-tempered man—what I may or may not have said when I saw the police undoing all my work I leave to your imagination. It was not a moment for a man to remember his words.'

'You say that you don't remember whether you called out, "To hell with the police!" or not?'

'I do say so.'

He was pressed as to what he did next, but all that he could be got to say was that he was trying to keep the people quiet. Then came the great helmet affair. 'Did you give the order, "Helmets, boys!"?'

'I did that.'

'And did you set an example by bonneting a policeman from behind?'

Mainwaring's dark eyes shone; he bent his head slightly forward, in a way familiar to me. 'I did that, sir.'

'And upon that a dangerous riot ensued, for your share in which you were tried and sent to prison?'

Mainwaring pushed his head further forward and then thrust it upwards so that his forelock was flung back.

'Upon that, my good sir, a good-humoured game of shuttlecock took place with policemen's helmets, instead of a bloody attack upon their heads; and because I made them ridiculous instead of dead men, they never forgave me.' He had thrown out Sir Vernon Parke as I had seen him at Marseilles throw out the head-waiter with the bill.

He had no real difficulties after that. His conduct of the strike at Culgaith had really been admirable, and he was able to show that it was so. It was not put to him that he had really made that strike in order to make himself, which Lizzy knew to be the fact, and which he had practically admitted to me was a fact. That charge was made against him upon the Jarrow strike, and he had no trouble in disposing of it. He had only gone to Jarrow because the Government had sent him; the general strike had begun in his

absence. He flatly denied that he had made any suggestion of such a move to anybody at Jarrow. Names, meetings, speeches were put to him. There was nothing to be got from him, for the simple reason, I believe, that he had not done anything. I had the best of reasons for knowing that he went to Jarrow unwillingly and left it as soon as he could. He couldn't bear being away from Lady Whitehaven for an hour. But that part of his life did not come in. At the end he rose once more and gave Sir Vernon a piece of his mind. 'You waste your time, Sir Vernon. You cannot get out of me an admission of what I have not done. I could have procured a general strike at Jarrow as easily as you could believe it of me, and far more easily than it was procured by the rascals who procured it in my absence. If you really desire to know the facts you will hear them from a witness in this Court—but I can hardly suppose that you do.'

Sir Vernon Parke sat down. Evidence from the Treasury concluded the day. The next day ended the case.

I came out with the crowd and saw Mainwaring's ovation. He was received like a victorious general, but took it stiffly, without movement of a muscle of his face. He just touched the brim of his hat and pushed a way through the hall for the ladies of his party. I saw the Duchess on one side of him and Lady Mary on the other. Presently I

saw something else, which explained why he was so angry. Lady Whitehaven was under the escort of Lord Gerald Gorges! He also was scowling. Between her two lovers I felt sorry for that frail and pretty countess. But the Duchess was in overflowing spirits. She saw me. 'How d'ye do? Wasn't it too comic? I haven't been so entertained for years. Do come in to-morrow. They say it will be over. I say it's over now. Don't forget. Come in about ten. I'd love you to be at dinner—but the table would collapse if it had one more plate. Good-bye—I'm going to feed him up!' What a woman!

CHAPTER XVII

THE SURPRISE-PACKET

I REACHED the Court at ten, and just found a seat. Already the place was like the opera, or, say, the Horse Show on the Jumping Day. Everybody seemed to know everybody. Sir Vernon Parke came in at ten-fifteen, evidently fussed.

Shortly afterwards Lord Gerald Gorges ushered in Lady Whitehaven. He stiffly handed her over to the care of the usher, and immediately left her.

I saw her look appealingly at him, softly, and asking for human treatment; I saw her look after him with infinite tenderness. He neither answered the appeal nor seemed sensible of her following gaze. He bowed before her, turned and went out of the Court. I saw what it was. He laid his claim of escort upon her, but would have no truck with Mainwaring. My heart, as Homer says, was divided between pity for a woman in such a pass and scorn for one who could put herself there. She had a moment of struggle; I saw her swallow convulsively; then her straying hapless eyes met mine, and she was in her world again. She bowed graciously to me, as I rose in my place. She had her daughter with her. Soon afterwards the

Duchess swam in, full of the pride of life as that is known to pink peonyhood. She behaved very badly, as I suppose she had a right—kissed freely, kissed her hand to a man in the court, talked nineteen to the dozen, pulled herself about, patting here, smoothing there, plucking at laces and chains. Every eye was upon her, and she knew it—and behold, it was very good.

Mainwaring strolled in at the stroke of half-past ten, and gazed calmly round the court. He saw me and nodded without any pleasure in the performance. He caught the Duchess's eye and bowed elaborately; he caught Lady Whitehaven's and nearly bowed himself in half. She, desperately endeavouring, pretended it was all right. Mary Pointsett's looks devoured him, but he took no notice of her. Beside him on the seat below the bench was a black-haired, sleek young man whom I had not seen on the previous day. He was very spruce, but did not look a gentleman. I should have guessed him an articulated clerk except that Mainwaring talked vehemently to him for minutes at a time.

Then with a call of 'Silence! Silence!' and a general rising, the Lord Chief Justice came in, a wonderful old relic, thoroughly in his element. He bowed to the ladies, he leaned forward with a whispered gallantry for the Duchess. His saurian eye swept up Lady Whitehaven and her pretty girl. One could have sworn that the handkerchief which he always carried, and frequently to

his nose, was rarely scented. No man of his day looked more wicked, or was less so, I believe, than he. But he enjoyed his reputation, every wave of it, and would have been infinitely disturbed not to be thought an old rake. When he was composed, and his papers before him, he looked over his glasses at the learned counsel, and while Sir James sat still, and took snuff, Sir Vernon Parke rose in his stead, and I knew that something had happened between the adjournment and the morning.

Sir Vernon in his most restrained and rounded manner explained that something had. His clients, he said, after the examination of yesterday, had been convinced that a mistake had been made, and like honest men were anxious, at the first possible moment, to repair it, so far as that lay in their power. The conduct of a great journal, a great daily journal, undoubtedly must tread a narrow pathway between observation and inference. It must tread that pathway exposed to the gusts of political excitement, of political passion; it must frequently be impeded, sometimes obstructed by popular prejudice or strong party-feeling. Here he enlarged on parties in politics, and the Lord Chief Justice, joining his hands, placed the tips of his fingers against his lips, closed his eyes and apparently slumbered. From that he turned to *The London Messenger* and praised it warmly, but tempered his encomium with gentle regret that so very noble a career

should be checked by an error of judgment whose very enormity, did one but consider it calmly, proceeded from a rigid standard of political propriety. His clients, in fact, expected too much from public men. They preached a Counsel of Perfection, it might be said. They were concerned for the credit of the Administration, as such, and the more profoundly they disagreed with the opinions of the party in power, the more deeply anxious were they. He then spoke of Mainwaring's record, more in sorrow than in anger. He reminded his lordship that he had heard that at length from the plaintiff's own lips. He need not dwell upon it now, upon the recklessness which endangered the peace in Trafalgar Square, and had brought upon Mr Mainwaring the punishment of riot and outrage. A great many more facts which, as he said, he need not recall to memory, he proceeded to recall at length. Finally, having shown Mainwaring to be a pirate living from hand to mouth, a beast of prey and an Irish adventurer, he came to the point. His clients were now convinced that, however reasonable the allegations had been upon which they proceeded, they were allegations not founded upon fact. Mr Mainwaring, they now believed, acted upon the instructions and in the interests of the Treasury. He was not in the hire of the Trade Unions. He had no part in promoting the general strike. These things had been credibly reported to *The London Messenger*, and honestly, though sadly, believed.

The proprietors and editor of that great newspaper desired to withdraw all that had been said. They offered Mr Mainwaring the most ample apology, and submitted themselves to whatever pecuniary damages the Court might adjudge them. Thereupon Sir Vernon hitched up his gown and sat down upon it, losing, apparently, all further interest in the case.

Sir James Bustle, after shovelling in snuff with a series of sniffs which pierced one to the spine, rose in his place. He was glad to hear his learned friend; he was always glad to hear him; but he was never so glad as when he heard him putting a good face upon a bad business. Here, he told the Court, was a business bad beyond example or belief. A series of long-continued and unceasing attacks had been made upon a distinguished public servant. No damages could be too severe, no apology could be adequate to such a disgraceful business. The admission to-day that the so-called facts in the possession of *The London Messenger* were miscalled facts could have been made on the day on which they were aimed at Mr Mainwaring's reputation. Nobody knew that better than the clients of his learned friend. Of one thing he was confident—his learned friend could only have learned them last night or this morning; for he ventured to say—and then he allowed himself some five minutes of compliment to Sir Vernon Parke, who beamed upon him, and glanced at the Duchess. But after that Sir

James grew cold and unkind. The thing could not stop so easily. Disgraceful imputation, amounting, he was not afraid to say, to conspiracy and treason, had been made against Mr Mainwaring. He had been charged, and repeatedly charged, with having procured a general strike in the great industrial district of Jarrow. Such a charge, if true, was tantamount to accusing his client of engineering a civil war in this country. His client was in the hands of the Court, but he claimed the right of every man of honour, not only to clear himself of such a monstrous charge, but also—and here Sir James rammed home his words with a slapping hand—but also of proving who in fact *was* the guilty person. For guilt there had been in this matter; a general strike *had* been engineered; and he was in a position to prove by whom that wicked action had been perpetrated. His client felt, and he, Sir James, was of his opinion; that the matter could not stop in this Court. On that account, if on no other, he claimed the leave of his lordship to put a witness in the box before he could consent to accept the terms offered him.

Upon that there was a great to-do. No words of mine could picture the horror and grief of Sir Vernon Parke. He danced about like a gnat in a sunbeam; his cries of protest were pregnant with hurt. Sir James took snuff and gazed stolidly before him, and I could see that the Lord Chief Justice had made up his mind. He spoke

to the jury in his most silvery tones. He thought that they would agree with him, in view of what the learned counsel had said, that evidence of such a nature ought to be put upon record. They would shortly be called upon to assess damages for what was now admitted to be a very serious libel. He should take upon himself to direct them to consider the evidence carefully and candidly, both that which might be given in chief and that which might be elicited in cross-examination. Then he sank back in his elbow-chair, and Sir James said, 'Stephen Fawcett Headworth.'

The sleek-headed young man edged past Mainwaring, and went into the box. His name, he said, was Stephen Fawcett Headworth, and he was a journalist by profession. He had been on the staff of *The London Messenger* for some four years, but was not now. He had done a good deal of descriptive reporting for the paper. Yes, in particular, he had reported the Grateby murder, and had been instrumental in bringing the murderer to justice. He described the general course of a reporter's duties. You were given a very free hand, he said, on *The Messenger*, but were expected to be very smart. You had to give them facts; and if the facts weren't there you had to hunt about until you found them. He had often reported meetings of Mr Mainwaring's: one of them had been the riot in Trafalgar Square. He had taken the trouble to learn all about Mr Mainwaring. You were expected to do that. He was

sent up to Jarrow, he said, as soon as the strike became likely. When Mr Mainwaring went there he himself returned to London in obedience to a telegram from Sir John. He saw Sir John at his private house in Cadogan Gardens that same night.

'Sir John said, "I think we've got that chap. He'll be in this up to the neck."

'I said, "I think he is going up for the Government." He said, "Bah! he'll sell the Government if it pays him." I said "He's more cautious than he used to be." He said, "Pooh! a little encouragement." Then he said, after a bit, "We want a scoop out of this, Headworth. We have been on his tracks a long time. You have a chance here in a thousand." I said that I should do my best, but that I was sure Mr Mainwaring would be careful. Sir John said, "Not when his blood is up. Not if you know your business. When he smells the battle, you will see, he'll say among the captains, Ha, ha!" And then he said, "Now, my boy, don't you let me down. There's a good deal in this. You have your way to make, and I will see to it—if it happens to be my way."

'What did you gather from that remarkable conversation, Mr Headworth?'

'I considered that Sir John was anxious for Mr Mainwaring to commit himself.'

'What did you understand Sir John to mean by "Pooh, a little encouragement"?''

The sleek young man adjusted his pince-nez.

'I took him to mean that if Mr Mainwaring had much to do with the Labour organisations he might go further than he intended.'

'Is that—— Did you take that to be the whole of his meaning?'

'No, sir.'

'Did you take him to have meant that if encouragement of the sort could be given to Mr Mainwaring, Sir John would not have been sorry for it?'

The young man again fidgeted with his glasses, and spoke, when he did speak, with difficulty. 'Well, Sir James, I knew that Sir John had a down upon Mr Mainwaring.'

'A "down," sir? And what is a "down"?'

'I mean that Sir John did not think well of him, or wish him well.'

'Is your meaning that Sir John wished to see Mr Mainwaring ruin himself politically? Don't say, Yes, if you don't mean it. I don't at all wish to lead you.'

'I have heard Sir John say that the sooner Mr Mainwaring dished himself the better.'

'Sir John Copestake, then, to your understanding, thought that there was a good chance of Mr Mainwaring dishing himself, as you say?'

'Yes, sir.'

'With "a little encouragement"?'

'Oh, yes, sir; he certainly said that.'

'And if you knew your business?'

'Yes—he said that.'

'So I understand. Then he went on to advise you, you say, not to "let him down." How did you understand that?'

'In this way. There had already been a leader in *The Messenger* about the strike, saying, among other things, that now we were reaping the fruits of seeds sown in Culgaith. Sir John would not want to have to go back on that.'

'It was for you to see that he did not?'

'I understood it so, certainly.'

'You understood, in fact, that if you were to "make your way," as he said, and you have told us, your way was to be his way?'

'Yes, that is what I understood.'

'And Sir John's way was the "dishing" of this member of Parliament, sent up to Jarrow on behalf of the Government? Is that what you understood it to be?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And you had a free hand?'

'Oh, yes, Sir James.'

'And on that you returned to Jarrow?'

'Next morning.'

'Now, tell my lord and the jury what you did in Jarrow.'

The young man addressed the judge rather than the jury. The old Chief, his fingers to his lips, watched him solemnly over his glasses, uncommonly as an owl in a cage watches a circling mouse. The mouse whips round and round, panic increasing his pace. Just so this young man grew

more and more glib, less and less assured. His hair dissolved in wisps upon his forehead; his glasses slid from his nose. I saw the dew of terror shining on his face. I disliked the young man extremely, and yet I was sorry for him.

What he did, in effect, was to inspire the Trade Union leaders with confidence that a general strike was what Mainwaring wanted, and that nothing else would so surely strengthen his hand. 'I said to Boulton, my lord, "Mr Mainwaring is the friend of you fellows. You give him an opening, he'll take it." They said to me, "Not likely, and put himself in your hands." I said, "Much he cares for us or a penny packet of us. Besides, I'm not talking to you now as *The Messenger*. I'm talking to you as a man." Boulton said, "*We don't care one damn for you—not a twopenny damn. But Dick Mainwaring is not the man he was at Culgaith.*" I said, "That's all you know about him"—and a lot more like that. And I believed it, for it was true.

'I saw all of them, and several of them several times. And they decided on the general strike. Then all of a sudden Mr Mainwaring went to London.'

'Did Mr Mainwaring know of the general strike being decided upon before he went to London?'

'I dare say he knew of it in a general way—suspected it, I mean—or expected it. But he didn't have it from the trade unions—not officially. They were to have asked him to come

in the next morning. But he went to London overnight—all in a hurry.'

'Did you have any conversation with Mr Mainwaring when he was in Jarrow?'

'Never, sir. He didn't know me, so far as I know.'

'Now, when this general strike was decided on, you wrote out your report and sent it off?'

'Yes, sir—but I didn't know that Mr Mainwaring had gone away.'

'No—I understand. Did you telegraph your report?'

'No, sir; too dangerous. I sent it up by train. One of our people took it.'

'In that you announced this general strike and said that Mr Mainwaring was concerned in it?'

The young man wetted his lips with his tongue, and immediately wiped them. 'My copy was published next day, sir.'

'What did you say?' That came from the Lord Chief—in a voice such as Lazarus might have used from his charnel-house. The young man shook. 'My Lord, I said that Mr Mainwaring was seeing the leaders of the men that morning.'

The Court was dead quiet. Even the Duchess left herself alone.

Sir James took up the tale. 'There was a leading article in *The Messenger* as well as your report?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You did not write that?'

'Oh, no, sir.'

'Was it headed "Treachery"?''

'Yes, sir.'

'Was that based upon your report?'

'I couldn't say. It was based partly upon my copy, and partly on what they thought in the office.'

'I see. And you have told us what they thought in the office. Well, Mr Headworth, I don't know that I need trouble you any further—at present.'

Sir Vernon Parke was on his feet; but the Judge held up his hand.

'One moment, Sir James. There are a few points I should like to clear up.' He turned to the witness as if he was a specimen under the microscope—as indeed at the moment he was—and inquired into the methods of *The London Messenger*. Headworth explained to him that the reporters' stories were always subject to revision, and might be contracted or expanded as space required. He said that when you were known in the office you always had a free hand as to treatment; but that in special cases Sir John overlooked the copy himself. In the murder case referred to, and in the Badlesmere divorce case, he, Headworth, had travelled far outside his brief. He thought that all good descriptive writers did. Realism was the note of *The Messenger*—facts all the time.

'And when facts were weak——?' suggested his lordship.

'Oh, well, you can't *make* facts, of course——' the young man began. The Judge removed his spectacles to look at him. That was all he did, but it sufficed.

His lordship sank back in his chair, and Sir Vernon resumed his rage and scorn. He was very short.

'You were dismissed from the service of *The London Messenger*?'

'I received notice to leave.'

'To leave at once?'

'I left the same day. I had three months' salary in lieu of notice.'

'But you have just told us that you received notice to leave?'

'I was told that my services would not be required.'

'Was that before these proceedings were commenced, or after?'

'Before.'

'When these proceedings were commenced, did you communicate with the plaintiff's solicitors?'

'No, sir. They wrote to me. They asked me to call.'

'And you told them what you have told us?'

'Yes; in the course of conversation it all came out.'

'And was anything said about terms, Mr Headworth?'

'No, sir—nothing was mentioned.'

'Did you not receive thirty pieces of silver?'

'No, sir, nor thirty pieces of copper, either.'

'That will do, Mr Headworth.'

Parke made the best tale he could of it, but was heard with visible distaste by the judge, and by a jury which had made up its mind long ago, and was longing to be free. The judge, who could see with his eyes shut, was very impressive and very short. He said that the defendants had done—at the instance of their learned counsel—the only thing that could be done, he need not say by men of honour; let him say by men of the world. They admitted what they called a mistake, in fact. The jury would consider in assessing the damages suffered how far those were aggravated by the sense of fact possessed by the remarkable young man, Mr Headworth. He should not delay them now in discriminating between the acts of the agent, Headworth, and the principal. The principal was undoubtedly bound by his agent's acts, and had admitted that he was bound. What might be the upshot, elsewhere, of this case he was not enabled to say. So far as he was concerned, he should forward the evidence to the proper quarter. Upon the matter of damages he would only add one word. The plaintiff in this case was a distinguished public servant, with a career before him. There could be no doubt that it bade fair to be a brilliant career. How far the reckless or malevolent act of a newspaper could imperil that, it was difficult to say; but it would be obvious to the jury that,

uncontradicted, unchallenged, the charges which had been brought against the plaintiff's integrity must have been fatal to it.

The jury, without leaving the box, gave Mainwaring £5000. I looked at him. He sat like a man of marble, without expression in his face. People were standing up, all looking at him; women were waving their handkerchiefs, some were crying. He neither looked, nor moved.

CHAPTER XVIII

CUPS

A PENCIL note from the Duchess had been handed me in court by the usher. It said, 'The Duke can't dine to-night, so *you* must! I know the F. (the Fenian) wants to see you. Isn't it all splendid? H. L.'

The Duke of Leven, I knew, had never been able to stand Mainwaring. He was a somewhat bloodless, fastidious magnate, almost damned in his fair wife. He drew many lines—and one of them was across Mainwaring's name. I had bowed my acknowledgments to her inquiring face, and did as I was bid.

As I walked up St James's Street I had the uneasy feeling upon me that I was being false to Lizzy; and an impulse possessed me to throw over honour and the Duchess and make a bolt for Montagu Square. How would she have received me if I had obeyed it? With mute reproach, or with gentleness, compassion, and warm tears? I thought that I knew, and in the same thought put away the impulse. Suppose that passion got the better of me—could I ever have got the better of the remorse that must have followed? Was

not her conscience a part of her beauty—perhaps its price? Could I bear to treat her as Mainwaring was treating her, as a lovely passing thing, for which he was lucky to have found a use, after he had done with her? To sacrifice her to my passion after he had used her for his would have put me lower than I now saw him. But I resolved to be done with these people as soon as I could. They stood between me and my religion.

There was a great collection of political somebodies in the long drawing-room. I saw the Prime Minister and his wife talking to the Duchess under the chandelier. Mainwaring was there too. The Duchess gave me a finger and a nod. She didn't seem to know me—but to assume that it was all right. I hoped that she didn't think I was Mr Headworth by any chance. The Groom of the Chambers had told me whom I was to take down, and where to sit, so I sought out my fate, Lady Mary Pointsett, and saw her just behind Mainwaring. I don't think I knew anybody else there, except of course by sight. The Whitehavens were not in the room—she no doubt under orders, poor woman.

Lady Mary had no use for me yet awhile, so I stood and considered her case. I knew her very slightly, though as I was a friend of her people's I had seen her dozens of times. She was very pretty, very thin, very pale, the translucent type of girl; like a palpable ghost, if I may say so. Her expression changed rapidly, as her thoughts raced

in her. Sometimes she looked like a spirit of the fire, sometimes like a maid of the mist, sometimes like a reproach. She could be very attractive, had beautiful manners, facile enthusiasms, abundant sensibility. With all that she might have passed into safe marriage without incurable damage but for the possession of, or by, a theatrical mind. She had a theatrical mind. She passioned for the great gesture, and forever saw herself filling the parts of high romance. She saw herself as the deserted wife, or abandoned mistress, so beautiful and so touching that she must by all means find the necessary blackguard. Or she was Juliet, and hunting Romeo; or Charlotte Corday, lacking only a man in a bath. In an evil hour—and I don't know when the hour struck—she saw herself the muse of Mainwaring. Recollections of the *Tragic Comedians* may have helped her; but I don't think she read Meredith. It was something more elementary than that. Mind you, it is right to say that she did it all in perfect innocence. What she understood about her mother's position I have no notion—but the fact that Mainwaring was a man of over forty and herself not one-and-twenty did not weigh with her at all. She did not know how old he was. He was a romantic hero, a Tristram to her Isoult; and as she had no moral sense whatever, and no sense of humour either, there was no reason why she should suppose him to have them—as indeed he had them not.

How should she have any moral sense? One

must get it from somewhere, and probably one sucks it in at one's mother's breast. And what did she get at her mother's breast? I looked about me with a kind of dismay at these delicately-coloured, half-dressed women, so extraordinarily good-looking, so liberal of their charms, so secure in themselves, and so free of themselves, arrogating so easily *il talento* as of right. Here was *il talento*, for instance, lightly accorded to this silly child by a mother who—if anyone in the world—knew what Mainwaring was. It was done as a matter of course. Mary wanted to go, and must go. But that was the way of it. I remember the utmost word of warning I ever heard Lady Whitehaven utter was, 'Darling, don't catch cold.' That was when the girl (in her teens at the time) was slipping out into the thickets at Wimbledon with a man called Harry Revel—a rattling ruffian who had lapped up women as a cat laps cream. As for the Duchess—I remembered that she thought it comic. This was the set, this was the world in which I now found myself—and then, where I stood, I had a vision of Lizzy in her maid's black-and-white, in the kitchen of her husband's dark house, reading Walter Scott under a gas-jet! Well, I may be a sentimentalist—I believe I am—but 'a sudden spring gushed in my heart', and I blessed that temperate, beautiful, recollected creature.

After all, as I have said, and insist, you can only fulfil the laws of your being. If you defy them you are a monster; if you obey them, you justify

Nature. And what are the laws of being? I know but two. To work and to have children. Fulfil those faithfully, and you are beautiful. And woe to who hinders you!

They began to go down, so I presented myself to my fate. 'A poor substitute for the hero of the day,' I said, but she accepted me graciously, and began to talk about the case, and to ask me about Mainwaring until I was sick of the very name of him. It was not until my infatuated partner left me that anything occurred worth recording. Immediately the women were out of the room the Prime Minister picked up his glass of claret and carried it off with him to the society of a young fellow of Balliol, and of Constantine Jess, who was in his Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade, and whom, Lady Mary had told me, Mainwaring was to succeed. Jess was to go to the House of Lords for that purpose. That might or might not be; but so far as I had seen the great man had not thrown a word to Mainwaring all dinner-time. He certainly had nothing to say to him now. He began a discussion about Mykenae and the French excavations in Delos, which occupied him till a late hour.

Mainwaring, after sitting silently for some time, presently beckoned to me to sit by him—which I unwillingly did. I congratulated him upon the result, and thought he took it with bravado. 'Pshaw—it was child's play. The thing was too easy. But the cream of the joke is to come.'

I asked him what was coming, and he said, 'I shall have him before the Speaker in two or three days. That ought to be the end of him.' He said then that he had been waiting for him these two years. I asked him how he had found Headworth, and he stared at me. 'Headworth! Why, I knew he was there all the time. Headworth is a nincompoop. But Copestake's worth having. I've done more for the Government than they've ever done for me.'

He had been drinking more than enough; but filled and emptied his glass, and went glooming on. I could see that some devilish rat was gnawing at his vitals, and that he drank so that he might buy oblivion. Every now and again he shook his head, as if to shake his misery from his ears. Once he groaned.

'Aren't you well?' I asked him, and he turned me faded eyes.

'I'm in hell,' he said, 'and have been this three months. And can't move hand or foot to help myself.'

That was as near as he had ever gone to speaking to me of his trouble. I didn't want to hear it, so made no answer. He took no notice of my silence, except to change the subject.

'That wasn't what I wanted to see you about, though.'

'I can't help you there,' I said, and he stared angrily, as if I had forgotten myself.

'I wanted to ask you why you have left off

coming to my house.' If I was in for it, I would go straight in.

'I can't go to your house,' I said, 'if your wife is to open the door to me.'

He lifted his eyebrows high, and looked at the wine-glass twirling between finger and thumb.

'Poor girl! She feels it. She is forsaken by everybody.'

I said, 'By you first, I think.'

'You're right there. But I could do no more than offer her the head of the table. You are witness that I offered her that.'

I replied with heat, 'I have been witness of more than I cared to see. I was present with Lady Whitehaven in your wife's room when you came down and made a scene. Do you think she can sit at your table when that may be done at it?'

He took no notice. 'I wish that you, Whitworth, would come and stay with me for a time. It would oblige me.' He staggered me.

'It might,' I said. 'But it would oblige nobody else. The thing is out of the question. You don't know what you are asking. At least, I hope not.'

It was hardly believable that he hoped to relieve some strain on himself by putting one upon Lizzie—yet that was what he was doing. There was nothing in the world that Mainwaring would not attempt if he desired to remove something from his path. I did not realise that at the

time, and the idea I had was that he wanted to get Lady Whitehaven to the house without protest—which though mute would have been sensible to him—from Lizzy. He thought (so I had it then) that if she had a lover of her own she would be 'estopped,' as the lawyers say, from objecting to one of his. That, of course, was much too subtle for him. He went at hindrances head down, like a bull. The fact was, he hoped that I should run away with her. There he was a fool, for not knowing Lizzy better; but in his present mood of baffled longing he was nothing but a fool.

He must really have expected that I should accept his proposal, for he seemed quite out of heart for a time. He drank again, without relish and to his visible deterioration. He flushed as much as so white a man could, and his eyes looked hot, as if there was thunder in them. He spoke to me—but I don't think he knew who I was.

'You see how it is—and how it has been this three weeks. That barber's block keeps her under lock and key. She was brought to the court and fetched away again. She won't speak to me, or open the door to me—she dare not. And I who have emptied my life into her lap! Flesh-and-blood can't stand it. I'm not to be made a fool of. You know better. Let her know it. Let her choose between a man and a kissing-stick. Gerald Gorges is about the age of that child upstairs. I was brought up in a country where men coped with men. Women were fought for

—but how can you fight a thing in stays? I'm going there now—I'll not be trifled with. If she refuses me she shall rue it. I have black Irish in me—black Irish blood—and it was distilled in Provence. That's a potent liquor, let me tell you. A drop of that will scald. Let her be careful—a woman who plays with a heart like mine. By God, sir,'—he raised his head and his voice rose with it—'if I've taught your Parliament to believe in me, am I to be scorned by a piece of rosy flesh?'

'Shut up, man, for heaven's sake,' I said. 'They are looking at you.'

He growled. 'Let them look. They shall look longer yet.' His beard sank to his shirt-front. He was very drunk.

The Prime Minister rose, and Lord Milnthorpe, who was acting host for his father, rose too, not without a scared eye for Mainwaring. 'Drunk, eh?' he said to me as he passed. 'Will you look after him?' I nodded. They all went up. I got Mainwaring some soda-water. He asked for brandy in it, and I gave it to him. He mixed it stiff, and tossed it down. It seemed to revive him.

'Tell Molly I'm going,' he said. 'I'll wait here.'

'I'm damned if I will,' I said. He lifted his head in astonishment, and stared at me. Up he got, steady as a rock, put his head down, tossed it up, and left the room. Straight as a die. He went upstairs; for I heard him, and into the great

gallery; for I heard the door slam behind him. For myself, I was sick to death of him, of them, of life itself. I went out into the hall, got my coat and hat, and escaped.

For a moment, under the stair, I stopped. I had a horror of what he would be at with that unhappy child. But whatever it was, could I have done anything to prevent it? I knew I could do nothing.

CHAPTER XIX

CLIMAX

THE very next afternoon this remarkable man rose in a crowded House to make a 'personal' explanation. I didn't hear him—had had no idea it was to be so soon—but it certainly read uncommonly well. He had in a high degree the power of lucent, unadorned expression. Boaster as he was, and blackguard as he was, he never boasted in the House, and without cant he was able to conceal his blackguardry. His humour, which was biting and bitter too—that is, left an acrid after-taste—never spared himself. He was pleased to make merry over his exploits in Trafalgar Square; but for him, he said, the police might not have been able to get their helmets on again, 'for a dog when it is angry goes for the head.' Just so, without excusing himself or seeking to avoid reproach, he was able to explain all his barricade performances. That great meeting on the Embankment, for instance, when he went down to the House at the head of a howling horde some thousands strong—he had led them at the double to the very gates of Palace Yard, and

then switched them off into Westminster, and 'to God knew where, but he himself did not.' As he put it, he had invariably saved the Queen's peace; and yet he was able, while demonstrating that, to make it perfectly clear that, in his opinion, the hordes and mobs of hungry, ill-washed men had griefs of their own, with which he, Mainwaring, was in sympathy. On Culgaith he must have been most moving, for I believe—however he started the thing—he had been true of heart afterwards, from what I saw of him there; and it is very certain that he did keep the colliers there within bounds, and did obtain them, by his own power, their just demands. So did he deal with the recent affair at Jarrow, making it appear (which may have been true) that the trouble was on the point of settlement when it was upset by 'the blundering intromission of a self-seeking knave.' Then he turned to the 'self-seeking knave' and hit out straight from the shoulder. He let himself go about 'the ways of new Journalism as expounded by a practitioner of repute.' He repeated the conversation between principal and agent on that evening in Cadogan Gardens, and then he said, 'Sir, in the present state of the public appetite it becomes the House, as I conceive, to uphold the sanitary laws. A public fed upon lies will be a lying public; a publican who feeds them on lies for his own vile purposes should not be suffered to exist. It matters little whether I or another stand in his way, whether I or another

go souse into the mud he has fouled for us. But it matters very greatly how the people are fed; and it matters very greatly how the Government of this country and the Parliament whose servant it is are represented and reported abroad. Let nothing true be hid; let there be no screens. We are not here to masquerade as patriots. But let no distorting glasses be used, which may swell me out to a bladder of fraud, or attenuate another to a crooked stick of iniquity. Let us be honest in our dealings with them we are hired to serve.' And so on. He ended by thanking the House for hearing him in justification of himself. He was warmly cheered when he sat down. 'Loud cheers,' my paper said.

The Prime Minister followed him at some length. He was always too long for me; his principle of oratory was, never use one word where three will do; and if he had another it was—take a motion, and divide it into three heads. All this he did, tediously, but with the noble sincerity which was a part of his character and made William Hardman a great man. Long as he was, there was no doubt but he took a serious view of the case. He proposed that the printer and publisher should be called up to the bar of the House to be reprimanded by Mr Speaker; and it would appear that the House was of his mind. But it was necessary that the leader of the opposition should put in his word—and so he did.

'MR BENTIVOGLIO deprecated the proposal.

He thought that the honourable gentleman's honour had been sufficiently vindicated by the apology, his reputation adequately established by the exemplary damages awarded. He must say that he did not consider the House to be the proper place for the recriminations of rival pleaders, or the exultation of the successful over his fallen adversary. Such exultations might suit a farmyard, but not the Senate. Although he did not defend the intransigence of the public Press, he could not approve any more of the interference of the Administration in private trade disputes. It was said that Government works were endangered, but was not that a matter for his honourable friend at the Board of Trade? And was it a healthy precedent to select a private member of the calibre of the honourable member for Skilaw to treat with professional agitators not so fortunately seated?

'MR MAINWARING begged pardon. But did the right honourable gentleman assert that he was a professional agitator?

'MR BENTIVOGLIO withdrew the expression "professional." Whether the hon. gentleman was an agitator or not was a matter of judgment. It depended upon what an agitator was. To his mind, he was free to confess, an agitator was one who agitated other people.

'MR MAINWARING. As the right honourable gentleman is now doing.' (Mr Bentivoglio made no reply.)

He would not. I can see him now, sitting with his arms folded, his weary eyes closed down.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister carried the House with him. Sir John Copestake and his printers attended with the Sergeant-at-Arms, and with lowered heads received a wiggling from the Speaker in his most shocked and solemn manner. That followed in due course; and so, I may say in advance, followed in a more leisurely manner the translation of Mr Constantine Jess to the House of Lords, and the presidency of the Board of Trade to Mr R. D. B. Mainwaring. But Richard Damn-to-Blazes was not there yet, and was not there long. My record now hastens to its climax.

CHAPTER XX

CRY FROM CAVENDISH SQUARE

I THINK it came in January; I know it was after Christmas, which I had spent at Weston with my sister. I had seen nothing of Mainwaring, and heard little except rumours that he was going to be taken into the Cabinet; I had seen nothing of his exalted acquaintance, who of course were away from London. Lizzy still wrote for books. She was tackling Shakespeare, by her own request. From her I got very little. 'Mr M. has been away all this week at a Conference, or something, at Leeds.' That was the kind of thing. Or 'The Duchess and Lady Mary were here to dinner. I hated it.' I remember that, and remember wondering how she could stand it. But I think she was too proud to tell me anything definite. I don't believe she could have brought herself to write the words down which would say what she really thought was going on. Imagine that decent, reticent, law-abiding girl face to face, behind his chair, with Mary Pointsett's *talento* unabashedly displayed, and Mainwaring's flagrant indifference to surroundings, and the shallow *bonhomie* of the roystering Duchess of Leven! Imagine her judgment of the display, her scorn of the women in it,

her resentment for the man who had dragged her into such a world. Then, after the House had risen, 'M. has gone to stay at Bigbury, the Duke's place. This house is very quiet. It suits me.'

I received that at Weston, and just about then I heard—my sister read it out of a letter she had—that the Whitehavens were staying with another Duke—him of Kendal, who was Lord Gerald's brother. Agatha asked me if I knew them. I said I had met Gerald Gorges, and thought him too good-looking to live, and too stupid not to. She asked me what I meant, and I said, 'Oh, too stupid to know that he ought to be killed.' My brother-in-law said that that sounded rather a profane remark, and Agatha added, 'I suppose you mean that he's always about with *her*. I thought he was going to marry Mary; but it can't be that, because she's not there.' Then I was sure she was at Bigbury, and that the Duchess still hankered after the comic. Well, that's all that I knew until I went back to town; and then, out of the blue, I had a note from Lady Whitehaven, delivered by hand. 'My dear Mr Whitworth, I'm in town and quite alone. Do come to see me. I am in horrible perplexity and don't know how to act for the best. The sooner the better, as I am flying off again as soon as I can. May it be to-morrow? About five? We shall not be disturbed. Yours most distractedly, R.W.' I sent an answer back by the groom, who was waiting, that I would not fail. Of course I

knew what she wanted me to do, and equally certainly that I neither could nor would do anything at all. Let Gerald Gorges work for what Gerald Gorges wanted. I must say that, then, I had no kind of sympathy for this netted Aphrodite.

However, whatever I may be made of, it is not imperishable bronze, and I was sorry for her when I saw her. I was expected, for an elderly woman in a black lace cap opened the door to me before the bell had ceased to peal, and taking my coat from me, asked me to follow her. We went upstairs—the house had a swathed appearance—and I was ushered into a little pale-blue room with pink china about, and a pastel of the Duchess, and there found my lady with feverishly bright eyes, looking otherwise rather pinched. The tea was there, and she poured it out at once. ‘You see, I counted on your punctuality,’ she said. She was positively shy; I suppose in view of what she had to tell me.

But we did not get at it at once. She talked of indifferent things—her family, my family, Christmas in the country and all the rest of it, in a way which those people have, and will have, I don’t doubt, on the Last Day, when the trumpet shall have sounded, and they are waiting for their turn at the Assize. Did not the *noblesse* pay their compliments and crack their little jokes in the tumbril? I was never good at the kind of thing I did my best—but, by some ridiculous

fate, whatever I said was bound to bring us up sharp at Mainwaring or his wife. I remember that my temples beaded with the work.

At last she saw it, and really laughed. 'There seems no escape from him! But you know, of course, that I could only want to talk to you about that.'

'Well,' I said, 'I thought it possible——'

'You see, I knew you were a friend of his—I suppose his oldest friend up here.'

'Anywhere, I should think. I don't think he is a man who can count his friends as an asset.'

She sighed. 'No, no. He is not like that. He doesn't want friends: he wants subjects, creatures! That was my dreadfully unfortunate mistake.'

'I am sure it was a generous mistake.' She gave me a dewy glance. 'How kind of you! And I think I may accept it. I do indeed. Of course—I admit it fully—I have been very foolish.'

'Your first act to him was one of kindness. He was in prison, wasn't he?'

'He was just out. I had written to him when he was in prison, but he had not answered. Then I met him at Lady Mainprise's—at luncheon. It was pitiful to see. He ate like a wolf—but his eyes! I assure you I dreamed about them . . . They seemed to go through one. Like swords.' She shut her own for a moment—then, blushing like a girl, she said to me, 'You know I am afraid

of him. He can do what he likes when he looks at me.'

I guessed that. It seemed to me it would do good if I used her confession as a text.

'I'm afraid he's pretty bad, you know. Remember that I know him well. He is strong, and without any sort of conscience. I dare say that he bewitched you at first. I only hope you will be careful he doesn't bewitch Lady Mary.'

She hadn't expected that at all, and even now she was so full of her own troubles that it had no effect upon her. She opened her eyes wide.

'Molly!' she said. 'Oh, dear no, there's no trouble there. She is romantic, of course, high-flown and school-girlish. But he doesn't think about *her*. He only talks to her because he thinks that if he does he can come here. She is often at my sister's, and he brings her home. Then of course he has to come in. But I couldn't very well keep Molly away. My sister would want to have explanations. There would be a fuss. And there is fuss enough as it is.' She broke off abruptly and then said rather wildly, 'Mr Whitworth, it can't go on. It is making me ill. He pursues me everywhere—makes scenes—expects outrageous things. My friends notice it—how can they help it? I don't know what I am to do—I might go abroad—but that would be very difficult just now. And—oh, no, I couldn't go abroad just yet. I have had to tell the servants that I'm never at home to him—and of course

they know. I hardly dare go out at all. He goes everywhere—wherever I am. He finds out—if he doesn't know the house, he waits outside—and follows me. It is a persecution. And my friends—one in particular—a dear friend of mine——'

I thought I would risk it. 'Lord Gerald?' I asked. She blushed again strongly, and looked down. She hung her head like a girl. 'Yes, I mean Lord Gerald. He has begged me not to have anything more to do with him. He has insisted——'

I said, 'Couldn't Lord Gerald carry your wishes to Mainwaring?'

She stared at me, but then recovered herself. 'I don't think he could very well. You see, they have never spoken. They disliked each other at first sight.'

I wasn't at all surprised, but it seemed to me proper to insist.

'That I understand,' I said. 'But they have been introduced, of course—they met on your yacht I think? In any case, it is hardly a matter for much ceremony, surely. One thing is certain. If their positions were reversed I am positive that Mainwaring would speak to him, *sans façon*.'

I suppose I ought not to have said it. I did not realise at the moment what was unhappily the case that, just as Mainwaring desired the favours of this lady, so did she desire those of Gerald Gorges. He was in a strong position therefore.

She showed her sense of that, poor woman. I felt very sorry for her. She bit her lower lip, and then said rather shortly, but finally :

‘Gerald declines to interfere.’

After that she broke down altogether, let her tears brim and fall, and became what she had never allowed herself to be in my company, a woman rather than a countess. She told me what had happened before Christmas—what had determined her to invoke my help—‘If I had not gone away the next day I don’t think I could have held my head up again.’

It had been at a party—a large one—I forget where she said it was. There was dancing—‘Thank God the chicks weren’t there. I had sent them off the day before’—dancing going on in one room, and a crowd of people at the door leading to the next. In that other room were the dowagers. There were card-tables in there. She was in the dancing-room, had been dancing indeed, and was standing at the further end from the staircase, with her partner, when she saw Mainwaring come in and look about him. ‘He is so tall, you can see him directly. Oh, he looked perfectly dreadful. I’m afraid—in fact, I know—he had been—you know he *does*. He was deadly white, and you couldn’t see his eyes at all—only dark hollows where they ought to have been. He stood there gnawing his lip—I saw his beard working about. Someone spoke to him—but he took no notice. He kept looking about, working his chin. I was

shaking—I couldn't help it—and Jemmy Laxby saw me, and asked me what was the matter. And then he saw me. He put his head down, as if someone had hit him, and then threw it up with a jerk, and came straight through the dancers, as if he was *wading* through them—as if they were a river in flood. I was cloven to my place. He came straight to me—stood over me—and I saw his eyes shining. He said, "I must speak to you at once." I said, "Well, it can't be here," and left Jemmy where he was. There was no time to think of him or anybody. I went into the room where all the dowagers were—I knew them all, of course. He followed me, and there—in the middle of them—under the chandelier—he poured out the most extraordinary things—How he had loved me madly, how he had worked for my sake—how cruel I was—— What had he done to offend me? He said he would go on his knees, there, then—if I would speak one word to him. He said he was dying—that he had had a hemorrhage that morning—he looked ghastly—oh, dreadful—— Well, I don't know what I said, or what saved me—but I saw dear old Lady Heroncourt, and went to her. I took her hand, and sat by her. She made room on her stool. Of course, everybody had heard everything—but they went on as if nothing out of the way had occurred. He was still under the chandelier, looking at me—muttering to himself. Then, thank God, my husband came in, and took me away. I was nearly

dead of it.' She was nearly dead with the recollection of it, poor soul; sank back, shut her eyes, rested her cheek against the chair, and put up her feet. I didn't know whether she was going to faint or to sleep. She looked very pretty there—ten years younger than she could have been, and as relaxed and innocent as a tired girl. I didn't say anything—what was there to say?—and I believe she really went to sleep for a few minutes.

Then she opened her eyes—I could only see one of them—saw me sideways, and sat up. 'I'm so sorry. I am awfully tired. But you know why I wanted to see you now—don't you?'

I said that I did. I said that I would see Mainwaring as he came back. Did she know when that would be? He was at Bibgury I believed.

She said—her voice was worn now and old—'Yes, he is with my sister. He writes to me every day nearly. I never answer—but he always writes. He says that he shall come back as soon as I do.'

'Really,' I said, 'I do think your best plan will be not to come back.'

She said, 'But I must. I can't keep Molly in the country for long. And the House meets in February—and Jack always likes to be up for that. He goes, you know.'

Then I had another scheme. 'It might be worked through Lizzy. I don't mean to put it all on to her. You have asked me to help—and I'll do what I can. It won't amount to much,

you know. He's a great man, now, and I am a nobody. He'll simply scorn me. But still—I'll have a shot. But if Lizzy could be brought in——'

She thought of that. 'How could one bring her in? She's a dear girl, and I'm very fond of her—but I don't know that I could quite——'

'She has a great heart, that girl,' I said. 'I am sure that if she were sorry for you——'

Poor Lady Whitehaven smiled—a wry and rueful smile it was. 'I'm afraid she would more probably be angry—don't you think?'

I didn't think so. I didn't think Lizzy was a jealous woman. But I was sure that Lady Whitehaven knew what I felt for Lizzy. I said, 'No, I don't agree with you. I think she would help you if you told her something of what you have told me. If I may say so, the more frank you are with Lizzy the more warmly she'll help. I don't believe Mainwaring wants her to leave him, and I know that she has thought of it. Of course, she sees what he is doing. She is naturally shrewd. She knows him through and through. Well, my idea is that if she told him that she should leave him—and she wouldn't tell him so unless she meant it—it would have a great effect upon him.'

She became very thoughtful over it, and finally said that she would probably see Lizzy as soon as she came back. She thanked me very touchingly for being so kind, as she called it. If I had been kind, she had made me so.

Going out, I admit I was chilled somewhat in my ardour. Lord Gerald Gorges was on the doorstep as I went out into the frost. He looked at me full, without recognition, and went into the house without an inquiry. He, too, it seemed, was expected. It seemed to me rather a case. I wondered how she had known how long I should be. When I looked at my watch I had been there two hours.

CHAPTER XXI

SICK-BED

WELL, and then, just as we were conspiring to snuff him out, he fell ill. It was after the New Year's List, which announced that Her Majesty had been pleased to confer a peerage of the United Kingdom on, among others, the Right Hon. Constantine Jess, M.P., President of the Board of Trade : yes, it was when he was in full view of his promised land. Lizzy had a letter from the Duchess—no, a telegram first, addressed to 'Matthews, Montagu Square,' and then a letter, saying that the Duchess of Leven was uneasy about Mr Mainwaring, who was ill at Bigbury Castle, and anxious that Elizabeth Matthews should come and attend him. Directions were given as to what E. Matthews was to do; and she was told that she would be met at the station. Lizzy wrote me this before she started, enclosing the letter. It seemed to me an insult prepared by her husband for his own ulterior purposes. My good girl didn't take it so. But she noticed it. 'You see, the Duchess thinks I am the parlourmaid. I am glad of that.' That was all she said.

He had told her the truth, then, in his cups at the party. This was another hemorrhage, and a

bad one. He had caught a cold, skating, and neglected it. Then one night he began to cough, and the horrible thing occurred in the Bigbury billiard-room. They carried him up and sent for the doctor. Afterwards they had another down from Harley Street. He wasn't fit to move for three weeks; high fever, and bleeding at the lungs pretty often.

Lizzy kept me informed. 'You will find him changed. He will hardly let me out of his sight. We have a night-nurse, and they are all very kind to him. Lady Mary has been sent away to her people. She bothered him, so he asked the doctors to get rid of her. She was very much upset. He made me write to Lady W.—but she won't come here. If he is no worse I shall bring him home. He seems to wish it. He has had a letter from Mr Hardman.'

In another letter she prepared me. 'You will be surprised when you see him. He has asked for you several times. He seems to cling to me. It is as if he was trying to make it better for me. He will hardly let me leave him for a minute. It is painful to see a man who was always so independent so different now. It is too late. But I must do what I can for him.'

That made me rather unhappy. I had never felt so before about her relations with him. There had been no occasion. But if he had a sick man's craving, or if he thought to atone for past neglect by extravagant demonstrations; and if I was to

be there, and he as careless of presences or absences as he generally was—why, I saw that I was to be passed through the fire. However, what she could do, I could do, I hoped.

The talk in London was that he would be declared President of the Board of Trade before Parliament met. Then he must be re-elected, of course. But—it was objected—was he going to die? Never mind what he does, the answer ran; old Hardman wants him; or, at any rate, the name of him. He wants what Mainwaring stands for. He is getting nervous that the Liberals may lose touch with the trade unions—as they may—or that Bentivoglio will get hold of them—as he would if he could. Besides, his back is up. *The Messenger* did that. One knew that the old man had the deuce of a temper. He thought that there had been a conspiracy against the House of Commons, and that Mainwaring had exposed it. Well, I think he had. That is how things stood in January. Mainwaring was brought home in February. The Houses met, and the appointment was gazetted.

Lizzy wrote to me to come. I had not seen her for four months. I was very much agitated, much more than she was. But she had a world on her young shoulders. She was twenty-six that year, and had been married six of them. She looked very pale, of a grave, still, sad beauty. She was in plain black.

I kissed her hand, and held it for a moment. She took it away without effort or apparent will. I don't think she noticed that I had had it in mine. 'I am glad you could come. He heard the bell and asked if that was you. He sent me down on the chance.'

'How is he?' I asked her.

She said that he was better. He had had no hemorrhage for ten days. The doctors spoke of his going abroad in another fortnight.

'You will go with him?' I had to ask. She showed me her sweet true eyes.

'Oh, yes, I should have to go with him. He wouldn't think of going without me.' Then her eyes beckoned me. 'I think we ought to go up now. He is very impatient.'

I followed her, despair in my heart.

He looked like a wandering spirit, paused in its drifting, to rest in that bed. A huge fourposter with red hangings it was. His hands were like claws. You could see his skull through the skin. There was something about the eyes which shocked me. Not that the fire had gone out. It was there. But it had gone cold. There was no arrogance there now, nor conscious power; no devilry, nor mockery, nor malice. But there was mischief. I could see it—and he made me feel it.

'Well, you see me lying where my enemies would like to see me! But I shall be even with them yet. If it hadn't been for this dear girl I

should have been a dead man, I can tell you.' He looked at her, and she very unwillingly, as it seemed to me, met his eyes. 'Come to me, my darling,' he said, and slowly she went to the bed. He took her hand. 'My true love has my heart, and I have hers.' I could hardly bear to see him—though he meant it all for me. His great gaunt eyes made free of her. 'Kiss me, Lizzy, kiss me, my darling.' She stooped her head, and his lips fastened upon hers. I turned my back upon them, went to the window and stood looking upon the Square, starving and sodden in the fog.

I don't know how long it went on. It seemed to me ages. Then I heard her sob, and say, 'Oh, don't, don't. I can't. I hate it.' She broke away, and came to me. She spoke in a remote way—with a dry rasp in her clear voice. 'Please sit by him for a little. I shall be back soon.' Then she went out of the room, and I turned very reluctantly to the bed.

'You see, my dear fellow, that I am in clover here. Bless your life, I knew what I was about when I fell in love with her. I haven't behaved well, I know. I dare say you understand how I have been placed—one can't always help oneself. But thank God for her, I say. Now I am coming round again, there's a new honeymoon to look forward to. The sooner the better.'

He didn't say all this in a rush—but rather jerked it out in spasms, as if he was squirting poison at me. I think he knew—I am sure he

did—that it was poison to me. At the same time—and that made it worse—I felt sure that he wanted her again. I could not doubt but he would give her another child, probably infected with his disease; and now I knew what this would mean to her. That knowledge made me hot; then cold all over. He saw me shiver, and his eyes gleamed. He felt able to talk of something else, so at ease he was; he even tried to be amiable, which he had never done in his life before. When Lizzy came back, beyond holding her hand, which he did throughout my stay, he did not attempt to make love to her again.

He said that he should take her to Marseilles, 'where you and I first blundered into each other.' She should see where he mewed his youth; the pothouses where he ate his mess of fish from a basin, and drank black wine; the garret where he hugged himself against the cold, the room where he taught. She should know what she had saved him from—and then, he said with shining eyes, she could go to the best hotel in the town, and see where they were now. He pulled at her hand and asked her how that would be. She said, 'You know I don't care for grand hotels.'

A maid came to the door and said that Lady Whitehaven had called to inquire. That seemed to me almost incredible—but not so to Mainwaring. 'Go down, my love,' he said 'You can bring her up. She's an old friend.' Lizzy went without a word. 'An old friend,' he repeated,

for his own benefit, not (I am sure) to justify himself.

He awaited her with impatience, and when she came in, greeted her gaily, even with an air of mockery. 'So you have come—you wish to be reassured. It is all right. They have cut my claws.' I made way for her. She looked very fluttered, but with her usual gallantry carried it off.

'We have all been very anxious—of course you know that. Now you are better you must expect all Leven House about your bed. Really, I have hardly been able to keep Molly in the house.'

He paid no heed to what she said. 'So they have not put out my eyes. They can still call?'

She nodded. 'I am sure they are very capable. But where has Lizzy gone? I thought she followed me in.'

He was looking at her, triumphantly. When she mentioned Lizzy he became easy. 'She wouldn't come here while you were here.'

Lady Whitehaven jumped up. 'Oh, but that won't do at all. I shall leave you immediately. I never heard of such a thing.'

He said, 'Sit down. Whitworth shall fetch her.' She turned to me.

'Do, please, Mr Whitworth.'

So I went for Lizzy, and found her downstairs, preparing a tea-tray. She knew my step, I think, waited for me, and when I came in, looked quickly and shyly at me, then faintly smiled.

'I am sent for you,' I said. 'Will you come up?' 'In a minute,' she said. 'I am going to take her some tea.'

She added, seeing that I said nothing—I could not—'I am making some for you too;' and then I said, 'No, no, I shan't go up any more.' She busied herself with the bread-and-butter. 'It is better for me when someone is there—but I understand, of course.'

I was very much upset, could not speak to her. She knew it and was distressed by it, but could not bear to let me go. It was one of those cases where torment, being lively, is better than despair, which means spiritual death.

'How long has he been like this?'

'I found him so when I went up there. It has been the same ever since.'

'Lizzy, how ghastly!'

She gave a dry sob. 'Oh, don't!'

It made no difference—I didn't really care one way or the other; but I asked, Had he sent for Lady Whitehaven? Oh, no, I was told. She just came. She had called every day, but this was the first time she had sent her name up.

I said, 'The woman is a fool,' but poor Lizzy shook her head.

'No, she's not a fool. She can't help herself.' Then, having washed her hands and dried them, she said, 'I must take this up.'

'I'll carry it to the door for you,' I told her. Then I said, 'Do you want me to come again?'

Her eyes showed that she did—a sudden dilation, a gleam. ‘If you would—if you could—— It is something for me.’ She told me then that he would be sure to want me—‘Not because he likes you—it is horrid—it is to let you see.’ She was moved by the horror of it all. She touched me on the arm. ‘Don’t mind for me—don’t be angry——’ ‘Oh, Lizzy!’ I would have kissed her—but she avoided me. I carried up her tray, and at the door she said, without looking at me, ‘Then you will come again?’

‘Yes, yes, and I’ll work for you next time.’ She gave me a grateful look and went in. I saw Lady Whitehaven move suddenly as the door opened.

CHAPTER XXII

HEAD DOWN

MAINWARING got better, and as he got better so his yoke grew lighter. People came to see him; he used to have a party to tea in his room every afternoon. The Duchess, of course, Lady Mary and others of their set who didn't count. With their advent Lizzy declined to the servant again. None of them had any idea of what she really was, though the Duchess had remarked her. 'That really lovely gel—what's her name? If I were my sis I should be consumed with jealousy.' Her 'sis,' as she called her, naturally was not; but Lady Mary used to watch Lizzy about.

Lizzy herself was happier, poor dear. 'Oh, it's much better now they've come,' she told me. 'He is only troublesome now when you are here. He likes to make people uncomfortable.' There was no difficulty about that.

There was talk of his going to Algiers; the *Zenobia* was mentioned, and Lady Whitehaven, much lighter at heart since Gerald Gorges had gone back to his embassy, thought that she might go too, and take Mary. Would I go? she asked me, supposing it could all be arranged. I refused.

Then she became sublime in her unconscious insolence. 'Lizzy is the difficulty, of course. One really doesn't quite know what to do about her. She has been devoted—but you know how obstinate she can be.' I don't think it occurred to her for a moment that the plain way out of the *impasse* would have been to let the unfortunate couple go alone.

I said, 'Lizzy will go if he wants her. She has her ideas of duty. You can't expect her to like it. The question she will ask will be, What does he like?'

'There would be my maid, of course—' she said musingly. 'It might do.' I had to leave it there. It is no use being rude to people who simply don't understand why you should be rude.

Then the thing was settled, from elsewhere. The lady began to be doubtful, to see difficulties, to make them. I heard some of her talks, and his glum replies. He was suspicious from the first. Then she said that it was impossible for her to go, but that the yacht was at his disposal for as long as he chose. He waved the yacht away as out of the question altogether. Either he had lost virtue in his late tussle with death, or he foresaw some metal more attractive,—he seemed to lose interest in her. She noticed it, and being all nerves and feelers made efforts to re-establish herself. Finally, he made her see that he didn't want her there any more, and she ceased to come.

She had had her directions from Madrid, that was clear. Gorges had put his foot down. 'If you would have me—choose.' Here was a situation for a woman who had had the best of two worlds all her life.

She ceased to come to Montagu Square, but sent for me, and soothed herself that way. She talked round and round the matter, evidently sore with Mainwaring that he didn't feel it more, equally hurt with Gorges that he felt it so much. Not at all in love with Mainwaring, but unwilling to lose him; very much in love with Gorges, but unable to move him. To me very tiresome. However, I am sorry for her as things turned out. She was at the end of her tether now.

The first thing that broke her up was her daughter's judgment, clear, just, and pitiless. Lizzy told me what had happened. Mary Pointsett had gone there and almost forced her way up. She had come in suddenly and stretched out her hands to him. 'Mother tried to keep me away, but I couldn't—I couldn't' Mainwaring was on the sofa, in his dressing-gown. He looked at her, Lizzy said, with glittering eyes. He showed his teeth. He had jerked his head sideways towards Lizzy, who was standing by the table. 'I don't think you know my wife. Lizzy, my darling, this is Lady Mary Pointsett.'

She said the girl went all white. Then she shivered and got up. 'She shook hands with me like a sleepwalker, and turned and went out of

the room. I went after her. She had hold of the banister and was standing there, just swaying a little. I said, "Lady Mary, it's not my fault," and she turned. "You look kind," she said; "don't be angry with me." I said, "My dear, how could I be?" We came together somehow and cried. I took her downstairs and gave her something to drink. She was shaking. Then I called a cab for her, and she went home.'

I don't know—I never knew—what happened between her mother and her. I understood that she went into the country. She married a year or two afterwards,—and has a family of children now,—a man many years older than herself.

As the time approached when he was to take her away Lizzy became very depressed. She told me that she didn't know what had happened to him. 'He seems to care for nothing now except getting away. He doesn't talk, doesn't care for me to read to him. Lies there looking up and smiling to himself. Sometimes I think his mind is going. I am afraid of him. You see, I know him very well. I'm sure he is going to do something. I can see it in his mind, but not what it is.'

I offered to go with him, but she wouldn't hear of that. 'No, no, I must be the one. If he were ill again and anything happened to him I should never forgive myself.'

I said, 'Let me ask him, anyhow. Let me see

what he says. My darling girl! Let me do something for you. It is all I live for.'

She put her hand on my arm. 'You do everything for me. Everything that can be done. You'll come to me if I wire, won't you?' I thought she said that out of kindness, to comfort me.

'I'll come to you across the world, Lizzy. You know that.'

'Yes,' she said. 'I know that.' Then I saw that she had asked me in order to comfort herself.

I asked her if he was going to Marseilles. She supposed so, understood so. 'He doesn't care to talk about what we are going to do. He has taken tickets to Paris. That's all I know.'

I tried to cheer her up. 'You'll like Paris—and you'll love Marseilles. I think the harbour at Marseilles one of the most exciting places in the world. How I should love to show you all that'

She took a deep breath. 'Ah, that would be different! I wonder why some people find happiness and others——! I used to be happy when I was a girl.'

'A girl, my dear one! What do you call yourself now?'

She shook her head. 'That's all done with. That goes when you have a baby. But my baby was born dead. So I have had no chance.' She hadn't. It was true.

I suggested to Mainwaring that I might be

useful to him abroad. 'Lizzy's very tired, you know. You and I have been at Marseilles before.'

'Lizzy's tired,' he said, agreeing with me. 'It will do her good. No, no. We'll see it out together. We've been through some things. It has been a good game. It is understood, my dear man, that you'll come out if anything unforeseen should happen.'

'Yes,' I said; 'that is quite understood.'

'I might overdo it, you know. It is a way I have.' He seemed to be talking to himself. 'Yes, I overdo it. But I've always done what I wanted, since I got my lift into the air. I felt my wings—I have made a flight or two. And God knows where I should have stopped if it had not been for——' He had a spasm of pain, which ran across his face, and down the muscles of his neck. 'Whitworth,' he said, looking deeply at me, 'in ten years I might have been Prime Minister of this place.'

'In ten years you may be.'

His eyes grew sombre. 'Not now. I take another line. I'm done with politics. They will bring me in again for Culgaith. No opposition there now. I shall be a Privy Councillor—a Right Honourable—and there I stop because a pretty woman chooses it so.' He laughed—a hollow, cheerless sound. I thought of hyenas in the night. 'But I call the halt,' he added. He would say no more.

* I saw Lizzy the night before they left—a wild

March night, blowing a gale of wind from the south-west. 'You'll be dreadfully sick, my love,' I said to her. She was much too uneasy to mind that. She clung to me. 'You'll come—you'll come—I know you will.'

'Oh, my love——' She withdrew from me a little way. Something moved me to say that we should not be long separated. I seemed to see doom on the face of the man in the next room. But I didn't say it. She looked at me, earnestly. 'I ought not—I know—but you are all I have.'

'I am yours for ever, Lizzy. That's an old tale.' Then she left me, and I went into Mainwaring's library. He showed me a letter from old Hardman. Polite, formal, old-fashioned. 'I have Her Majesty's commands to offer you the Presidency of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet . . . the interests of the working-classes which I know you have at heart . . . important modifications of the conditions under which . . . housing . . . hours of labour . . .' etc. He looked it all over as if it was a relic of the remote past, which to him indeed it was. 'I've been civil to him,' he said. 'That's done with.' Then he said, 'I've made a will. I put you in as executor. You'll act?'

'Certainly,' I said. 'I'll act when the time comes.'

'I know that Lizzy will be safe in your charge. Lizzy is a girl of gold. You know that. When I first saw her, scrubbing her mother's doorstep,

I give you my word, my heart stood still. A goddess in a print gown, with an apron of sack-cloth. Her beauty swept me off my feet—but she's more than a beauty. She's a good woman. And that's why I put upon her more than beauty can bear. *She* can bear it.'

I said, 'You tempt me to tell you what I think of you.'

He said, 'I know it. If you dared you would have taken her away long ago. But you dared not, because she's good. For that matter, my dear fellow, so are you.'

'And what of you, Mainwaring? Good heavens, what are you?'

He said, 'I'm a very proud man. I cannot be denied.' It was impossible to argue with him.

I saw them off from Victoria next morning.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SPRING

I HEARD from Lizzy, from Paris. Her letters were always inexpressive—on that account, to a lover, much more expressive than the most profuse could have been! She had been grievously sick, crossing, but was quite recovered. They were staying only one more night. He had taken her to a theatre. 'I can't say I liked it. I didn't know what they said. It was more than enough for me what they did. He met some people he knew at the hotel, and I had to dine with them. One was a member of Parliament, and one was French. They all talked a great deal. People looked at us. I think the Frenchman is going to travel with us, but am not sure. Richard asked him. I don't like him at all. It takes all sorts to make a world, but I have always lived in a small one. I suppose I am too old to change. Of course it's all my fault. I'll write again on the journey if I can—but don't expect it. I have a great deal to do. L.'

I could see that she was miserable, uncomfortable, 'out of it.' The Frenchman would probably think her fair game, and Mainwaring would not care. Jolly for me, all this.

Nothing more for three days, and then I had a post card which surprised me very much. 'Madrid' it was headed, and 'Hotel de la Paz.' She told me that they had only just arrived. 'You see where we are. I couldn't write before. Monsieur Lobjoy came with us, but is not staying here. I will write as soon as I can. This is the coldest place I have ever been in, after sunset. I hope we shan't be here long. It is very bad for him.'

I don't think I had a moment's suspicion of what was going on, or I should, I am sure, have gone out at once. I thought he had had a sudden impulse, and was making for Malaga or Cadiz. I thought Cadiz, as I knew what a good climate that was. Engrossed with my own affairs, I got what comfort I could from the absence of the Frenchman from the hotel. For if that Frenchman was struck by Lizzy's good looks he would think her fair quarry. He would see in two minutes that Mainwaring only found her a convenience.

Two days after that I had a telegram saying, *Please come at once.* No signature. Then I began to put two and two together, and added to them all the chips and straws of suspicion and foreboding I had gathered in a week or more. I guessed that something horrible had happened, and that Lizzy was entangled in it. I thought of the Frenchman and had a cold sweat.

I stuffed a bag, got some money, bought a ticket and left London that night. I had no time

to see Lady Whitehaven—besides, she sickened me. I vowed as I rattled towards Southampton—that was the only way open to me—that I had done with such people for good. There is a kind of frivolity that is worse than mischievous—that is poisonous. There is a kind of insolence which may consist with easy manners and be the more cruel the more glittering it is. The woman was probably now at the feet of her daughter. Let her get up a better one. And then I turned to wonder what had happened in Madrid. A hemorrhage——? A *fracas* with Gerald Gorges? Probably both. If he took a Frenchman with him to Madrid, he had a reason. What was that? I thought it probable that Mainwaring had some preposterous notion of calling Gorges out. He would insult him—Gorges would meet him. The Frenchman was the second. That was it. Well, and then? Would Gorges fight him? I thought he might have to. Would Gorges hit him? I could not believe it. Would Mainwaring fire at him? Mainwaring might do anything. And Lizzy, my bewildered goddess? Alone in Madrid, with a dead husband to bury—or a maniacal husband to endure. My heart bled for her. Southampton.

It was a wild night, with a wet, soft south wind. No rain. I went downstairs, looked at my berth, and said No, to it. I walked the deck up and down, I sat betweenwhiles, smoked, walked again. I watched the dark, swift waters, the churned

wake shining in the beam thrown on it by our stern light. I felt the soft wind to be full of whispers from Lizzy. It came upon me as mild as asking looks from her eyes. She used to look at me in a shy, grave way sometimes, asking if she had said something foolish. She never did—but she was afraid I should judge her. Well, the world could still be endured while there were good women in it, because it was still possible that there might yet be some good men. Not Mainwarings. God, what a man! Mad? No, I don't think—I have never thought Mainwaring was mad. He had genius, he was hag-ridden by it. It drove him to the accomplishment of his intent, whatever it was—Prime Minister of England, saviour of working-people, ruin of Copestake, husband of Lizzy Matthews, master of Rose Whitehaven, death of her lover—whatever it was, he must do it. The devil take him. Well, I was prepared to find that the devil had. What else could my poor girl mean?

A faint lifting of the dark, a thrill, a paling of the stars, we had turned the clock. A world too much cursed with men was turning in her sleep. It grew colder; a little wind ruffled the sea, and the ship rose and dipped to meet the driven waves. I went downstairs and lay on my bed. Being tired, I slept heavily and woke at the shore noises. Le Havre.

In Paris, as I had hoped, I just caught the Sud-Express, and was in Madrid next day. The

intolerable journey! I drove to the hotel which is in that huge square, where the people move about like flies on a table. My knees shook and seemed to give under me. I asked the porter in the hall for Madame Mainwaring. The man's face instantly changed. 'Come with me, sir.' I followed him upstairs.

Lizzy stood in the doorway like a ghost. She faltered, ran forward, and clung to me. The floodgates were loosed, she abandoned herself, was carried away. I let her cry herself to quietness. She told me that he could not last long. The doctor was with him, had hardly left him. Hemorrhage, of course. 'The morning after we came he went out with M. Lobjoy. He was out a long time. But he came back to lunch alone, and stayed with me till about four o'clock. We had some chocolate and he went out again, saying he might be late. M. Lobjoy came into my room and said there had been an accident. He had lost a great deal of blood. He was being brought back. . . . They brought him back in a litter. An Englishman whom I didn't know came with him. He was very polite, and began by giving me his card. "Lord Gerald Gorges." He said that he knew Richard. They took him up to bed. The doctor said from the first that it was hopeless. He is not bleeding now, but he can't speak. One lung is quite gone, they say. Oh, my friend, my friend, I am so thankful you have come.

'Lord Gerald has been very kind. He told

Lobjoy to go away. I think he has gone back to France. I hope so.

'It was through Lord Gerald that the people here are civil. They wanted me to take him away at once. They tried to prevent them bringing him in. The proprietor has been here—he was very angry. Lord Gerald saw him. It is all right now.

'I have no money. I don't know that Richard has much. Lord Gerald said that he met him that afternoon on some business, and that while they were engaged Richard suddenly choked, and then would have fallen if they hadn't caught him. They couldn't stop the bleeding all night. Oh, what shall I do?'

I comforted her. I told her that her troubles were nearly at an end. Now that I knew the worst of it, and could see that it was true I felt happier than ever in my life before.

She took me in to see him. He lay like a dead man, staring black-and-white. I thought he was dead—but the doctor, an English doctor, said that he was still alive. Looking attentively, I could see that he did breathe—but so short, so quick, so incredibly light a breath; you would have said it could not maintain a gnat in life. He was dreadfully thin, and looked as if his soul was in pain. There was a stretched, famished grin upon him. His chin was thrust up—and his black beard stood out like a bush. I thought that inside that wrecked, empty tenement of his

his dark mind was fighting busily, breathlessly, for a way out—a shift which even at this last hour might save him for his whim's sake. I wished at that moment for nothing so much as that he might find peace before he died.

Where my girl stood, beautiful in her pity and grief, a man came tiptoe, and whispered to her. I hadn't heard him come in. She came over to me and told me that Gerald Gorges was below. Would I go and see him? So I left her and went downstairs.

There was Antinous, as we used to call him—but a changed young man. In fact, he was now a man.

He came to me with his hand out. 'Mr Whitworth? We have met, I think, in happier circumstances. I am thankful that you are here, for that poor lady's sake. This has been a dreadful shock—but I must not keep you. I came to inquire.'

I told him. 'There's no hope. He may go at any minute.' Lord Gerald had no demeanour left. I saw that his eyes were full.

'Do you think I could see him? I must explain the whole thing. Nothing so dreadful has ever happened to me before. But I mustn't keep you. Only, if I might see him—on the chance of his recovering consciousness—it would mean very much to me.'

I said, 'I don't think it could possibly hurt. I don't think anything could make a difference——'

He looked alarmed. 'To her, you know?'

I said, 'Let's go up. I'll ask her. I'll tell her what you say.' We went up together.

There were the doctor, a woman—nun, I think—and Lizzy. Lizzy had her hands clasped round a pillar of the bed. I told her that Gorges was in the passage. 'He hopes to be recognised. He is unhappy. I think they would both be happier if it could be so. There is always a chance at the last.'

She nodded. 'Yes, oh, yes. Anything to make him quiet at the last.'

I beckoned him in. He came on the tips of his toes and stood by the bed. He was shocked by Mainwaring's horrible, noiseless struggle. His lips moved. I thought the young man was praying. I was. I am sure Lizzy was. The nun was, on her knees. The doctor whispered to me—'I should get a priest, if I were you.'

'He's a Protestant.'

'What does that matter? Even Protestants want to die easy.' I sent the porter out in a cab to get the English chaplain.

He came in about twenty minutes, fixed up his altar, lit his candles and consecrated his wafer. He dipped it in the wine and put it between Mainwaring's writhen lips. Wine or sacrament, it moved him. He gave a long, shuddering moan, and opened his eyes. He saw Lizzy, he saw me; he looked up and saw Gorges. The young man sobbed, and touched Mainwaring with his hand.

A flicker of a smile passed over him—it was like a child sighing, so light it was. Then his head moved. He turned his cheek to the pillow; his mouth opened a little. He sighed once. That was the end of him. Gerald Gorges was on his knees by the bed; the priest prayed on, commended his soul; Lizzy and I knelt side by side.

I left Lizzy and the nun to their ministrations, and went downstairs with Gerald Gorges. He told me all about it. A horrible story it was, too.

Mainwaring called to see him at the Embassy, and insulted him grossly before one of his secretaries. He insisted on a meeting that afternoon, and in such a way that Gorges felt he could not refuse. 'I named a friend of mine; the poor chap mentioned Lobjoy—a Frenchman whom he had brought with him for the purpose. A man of bad reputation. I knew all about him. I could not well refuse—in fact, it was impossible. And I own to you—you are entitled to know all—that I had brought it on myself, and on him—he being what he was. I had told Lady Whitehaven—I had begged her as a favour to me not to take him on a yachting cruise. I wrote strongly—I believed that she had given me the right. Well, well—I am punished—there's an end of what ought never to have begun. But all that being so, I felt that Mainwaring was entitled to have a shot at me. I need not tell you, I hope, that nothing would have induced me to take an aim.

But if he felt that he must shoot me—I don't think I could have refused him.

'Well, we met in the park here, and stood up. He had brought the pistols. I had none of my own. We stood up, and the signal was given. I fired into the ground. I saw Mainwaring lift his arm. His elbow was bent. He aimed, not at me. He aimed at himself. At that moment he had a sort of shudder. The thing went off over his head. He stood strangling; he grew livid. Then he dropped his pistol and clapped both his hands to his mouth. I saw the blood cover them. We had a doctor with us—we caught him. But he never rallied.' He stopped there—but began again when he had conquered himself.

'That unhappy, gentle lady! I had to think of her. I had not had the slightest notion that he was a married man. If I had known that, I don't know that anything of this need have happened. Lady Whitehaven, too——'

'She knew it,' I said, thinking he had better have everything before him.

'You blame me, I have no doubt; and I am very much to blame. I don't defend myself—nor accuse the dead. I can only thank God that by some miracle of mercy he knew me, and understood. If it is any consolation to you—as I think it was to him to be able to discern it in my heart—I shall never see Lady Whitehaven again.'

I said, 'Lord Gerald, don't say that. She has had more to bear than perhaps you know.'

He said, 'We must all bear what we have earned. But she and I had better bear our burdens alone. We may meet again some day—but not while I remember Mainwaring.' Then he broke out—'What a man! God forgive me for saying so—— Not a man, but a devil.'

'No,' I said. 'Not a devil, but a child.'

CHAPTER XXIV

HAVEN

THE formalities were put through by Gorges influence. Mainwaring lies buried in Protestant ground in the cemetery called Inglés. We put upon the headstone his name and, ultimately, when we knew it, his age. He was forty-seven. At Culgaith, in that drab town littered on two hillsides, they gave him a monument, which told lies. It called him President of the Board of Trade, and 'Friend of the Poor'—neither of which offices did he ever serve. But they didn't know that. In Madrid he is recorded as his parents named him. All that done, I took Lizzy home to London, and as soon as might be saw her into the train for her native place. We were very quiet in each other's company in those early days, but very peaceful, seeing clear sky and happiness ahead of us. I set to work to unravel and wind up Mainwaring's affairs.

He had made me sole executor and Lizzy sole beneficiary, and left some £3000, the remains of the damages he had had from Copestake. When I came to deal with his debts I soon saw that there would be much less than nothing for her. He

seems to have owed money for everything he had had, and ever since he had begun to have anything. There was nothing, however, due for the household. Lizzy had seen to that. His principal creditor was the Duchess of Leven, whom it was my duty to see.

This lady began by saying that she had no notion what she had lent him. 'He used to come to me like a bear with a sore head, and I knew what that meant. I had no use for him at all in such a state—so I used to ask him what it meant this time. I have his IOU's somewhere. If you insist upon it, I'll have them looked up. I suppose they come to a good deal. He had less idea of money than I have—other people's money, I mean. He had none of his own.'

I told her that I thought I must insist upon it. 'There's the will to carry out. And you know now that he has left a widow.'

'I know, I know,' she said. 'Beautiful gel. She was a housemaid, wasn't she? That was why he kept quiet about it, I suppose,—though Heaven knows what difference it would have made if she had carried it about on sandwich-boards. I should have gone to see her if I had known—and asked her here. I dare say she wouldn't have come—if she was wise.'

'She is wise, Duchess.'

'Ah! I fancy they are, you know. And have their pride. She was maid in his house, wasn't she? Do you know? I admire her for that.'

'So do I,' I said.

She gave me a quick glance—just there and back. 'My sis knew it all.'

'Yes, indeed,' I said. The Duchess threw her hands out.

'Why on earth——! Molly, you know, my niece, knew nothing about it. A sad business. She took it badly. They don't speak about it now—but poor dear Rose had to grovel. And now there's Gerald Gorges!' She shook her head. 'Rose's mistake was to put too much heart into those things. She is cut to pieces. You ought to go and see her.'

'Ah,' I said, 'I won't do that. I have nothing to tell her.'

'No, what can one say? She put too much heart into it—lent herself to assumptions——The Fenian assumed everything—so he had what there was! Then she fell in with Gerald Gorges. I always hated that young man. Bless you, *she* had enough heart for a dozen of them—always had. But with them it was sole ownership. My poor Rose! Oh, well, don't let us talk about it. Thank heaven, nobody has ever assumed *me*.'

Then I begged once more for the documents, and was promised them. She summed up Mainwaring neatly, I thought.

'He was the best of company when he chose. But the whole thing was *blague* from beginning to end. He bluffed the poor; he bluffed the Government; he bluffed my poor sister; and he

bluffed God. Until he got tiresome. Then the Authorities just blew him away. You can't bluff lung-disease.'

I said, 'Very true. He over-reached himself there. But he had audacity enough to carry him through *this* world. He told me when he was on his sick-bed here that if he had had ten years more he would have been Prime Minister.'

The Duchess opened her eyes. 'Why not? Bentivoglio has been Prime Minister—why not Mainwaring?'

He owed her seven thousand pounds, and the whole of his debts amounted to twelve thousand. Now I had to think how I was to clear the estate.

I didn't think; I knew; I just did it. It took the whole of my small fortune except three thousand; but with that in the funds and Lizzy's three, I knew we should be rich enough, with what I could earn. For my intention was to become a hireling, and live abreast of her, close to the ground, since neither of us was for the heights. With that in my mind, and with my hope in my heart, I went down to West Merrow, and saw Lizzy on the little platform, shading her eyes from the sun. Her eyes told her greeting. We did not so much as touch hands.

The village strayed from the station to the sea—a half-circle of white, thatched cottages about a green; a flint-and-stone church deeply sunk in its own dead, bowered in trees; a coastguard

station on a green cliff fronting the sea; a flagstaff, much linen hanging out in the wind; a villa or two; a scent of hawthorn over all.

Lizzy's people lived in half a thatched cottage, whose roof ran in one long slope at the back from ridge to ground. Inside, it was dark, low-roofed, full of odds and ends, but intensely clean. Her mother, a little woman, spectacled and pale, came to meet me. She curtseyed and called me 'Sir.' A tall young sister in a pinafore was there, dark-haired like Lizzy, high-coloured, already a beauty. I wondered where the family good-looks came from, and found out afterwards it was from the father's side. He was out at work, but came in at twelve-o'clock dinner. With him came yet another sister, from school. Mr Matthews was a man of fifty, who looked older. A silent, grave-eyed man, taking much for granted, including, I was glad to find, my sir-hood. In conversation he omitted it. The children said nothing at all; but there was no trouble with the old people when once the thing was set afoot. Lizzy, poor girl, couldn't find her tongue. But it was quite enough for me to see her. Her colour had come back; she glowed like a nectarine. Her cheeks were fuller; her curves more ample. Rest and certainty had done their beneficent work.

We went out and down to the sea-shore after dinner. It was a windless, calm, and perfect June day. She was shy, would not look at me,

or talk but in guarded commonplace. But I didn't care.

I told her that everything was done—except one thing. 'You don't owe sixpence in the world, Lizzy. You have a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and so have I. So I can come to you without pretences.' When this became clear to her she was startled. 'I don't understand. You must tell me everything. I must know what you have done.' I knew that she must.

So I told her that I had all the papers for her to see when she pleased; and then put the case from my point of view. I said that since we had decided to make a joint-affair of life we ought to share the responsibilities as well as the profits of it. I reminded her that long ago when I had helped her, it had been on the ground that it was better to stand indebted to a friend than a lodging-house keeper. But there was another thing to remember, which was that she had tried living out of her world and found that she could not. By what I had done I had put myself into her world, and did not propose to leave it. It seemed true, I said, that her world was the right one for sensible people, since it gave you full scope for essential things and little scope for unessentials. Anyhow, I loved her, and saw no chance of being happy without her.

She made no answer. I could see that she was greatly concerned. She sat playing idly with the pebbles, frowning, biting her lip. Her breath came

short, too. I waited, my future in *her hands*. Presently, as she said nothing, I took one of them and kissed it. Then she broke out :

‘It isn’t right. It can’t be. I should have been happier if you had left it—I would have paid it off——’ Her voice faded out. ‘Twelve thousand pounds !’

‘Dearest, you shall pay it off. You shall pay it to me, and my children.’ She grew red—I saw her eyes shining through tears.

‘I can give you nothing in return.’

‘You can give me what I have longed for for four years, Lizzy.’

‘But what will you do?’

‘I shall work, and love. What else am I here for?’ She looked at me, divinely smiling.

‘I can do that, too.’

‘We’ll do it together, Lizzy.’ She looked round about her. So did I. And then I asked her to kiss me; and she did.

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